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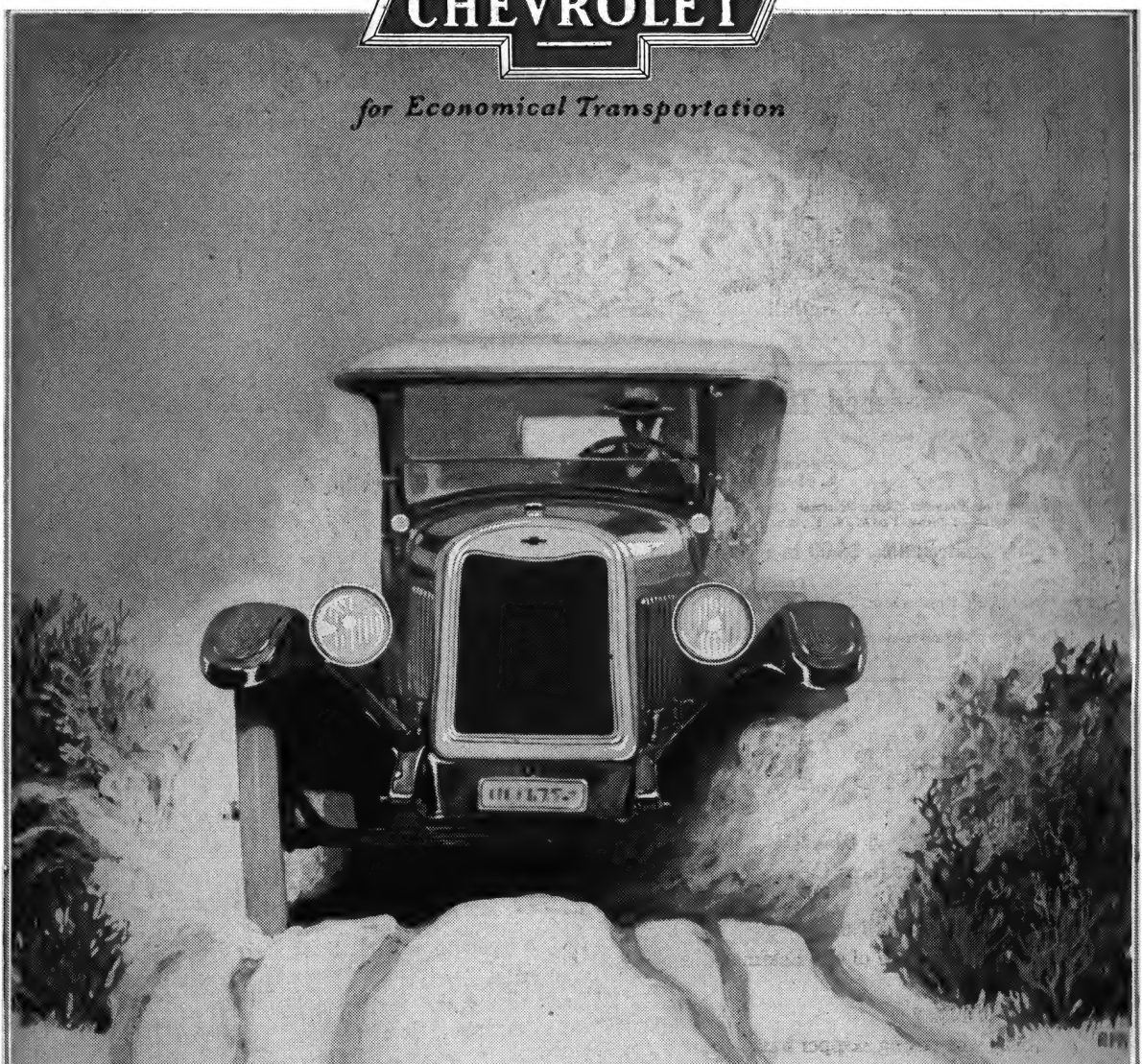


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Adventure

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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Cover Design . . . . . **A. L. Ripley**

One Complete Novel and Two Complete Novelettes

ALTHOUGH he didn't know it, the war was play to *Nell Colburn* until he went to the front with the Marines. "A SERGEANT OF CAVALRY," a complete novel of the A. E. F. by Leonard H. Nason, is in the next issue.

THE jungle calls its sons in mysterious ways to protect it from the invading Portuguese nobles. "—AND OF GIDEON!" is a complete novelette by L. Patrick Greene in the next issue.

"FOR twenty years *Alex Cheney* and *Lisbeth* had been well nigh inseparable. She was the one thing of his which he ever bragged about; the only being upon whom he openly and unblushingly lavished affection. And those who claim that a mule is incapable of gratitude never knew *Lisbeth.*" The complete novelette, "LISBETH," in the next issue is by Frank C. Robertson.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

***Adventure* is out on the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month**

Adventure June 10th 1925 Vol. LII, No. 1



Author of "Tros of Samothrace," "The Enemy of Rome," etc.

CHAPTER I

THE BRITISH CHANNEL. AUTUMN B.C. 56

A BIREME, Julius Cæsar's until Tros captured it and used it against Cæsar, plunged and rolled before a westerly gale, not shipping much water, because Tros was at the helm, but swinging her fighting-top like a pendulum and making her working crew of British fishermen miserably seasick.

Forward, on the deck between the citadel and the bow, more than a score of British gentlemen lay dead, a sail spread over them and a guard of four not so badly wounded men posted in their honor. Below, in the dark of the creaking hold, the more severely wounded groaned and grumbled at the crude surgery of their unwounded friends, whose methods, whatever their motives, were abrupt and painful. They kept the rats at bay, whatever else.

Tros, amber eyes heavy with weariness, his great jaw grinding, shaking his head at intervals to throw the black hair from his eyes, steered a course far closer to the coast of Britain than was necessary to make Thames-mouth; he had come from the mouth of the Seine and might have stood nearly due East toward the Belgian sands in order to take full advantage of wind and tide.

Orwic, nephew of Caswallon, King of the Trinobantes, disguised like a Roman legionary, except that he had a mustache and his fair hair fell to his shoulders, swung himself up from the hold and climbed the poop by the broken ladder. For a minute or two he leaned overside and vomited, then worked his way hand over hand along the rail toward Tros and pointed at the coast of Britain, where the chalk cliffs stood like ghosts in a gray mystery of drifting fog.

"Too close!" he objected. "A Roman

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ship—we look like Romans. If we put in there, they'll—" he leaned overside, but managed to control himself— "remember the Northmen," he went on. "Two long-ships—ran from us toward Pevensey. They'll have burned some villages. The next foreign-looking ship that runs for shelter will——"

He vomited again, clinging to the lee rail. Tros waited for him to recover and then gestured toward the opposite coast of Gaul, invisible beyond a howling waste of gray sea.

"I would run in for the sake of the wounded; this cold wind tortures them. Better a fight with Britons than another brush with Cæsar!" he said grimly. "But Cæsar has had time to reach Caritia * by chariot and put a dozen ships into the water. He has had time to set a dozen traps. He'll risk storm and everything to catch and crucify us. Twenty of us fit to fight—crew no good—torn sail—and who is to man the oars?"

"But if you hug the shore our own Britons may put out and throw fire into us," said Orwic. "That's what we always try to do to the Northmen."

"Not in this gale!" Tros answered. "Of two foes, shun the stronger. Cæsar is the craftiest of Romans. We have stung him, Orwic. We have made a mock of him before his own men. We have tricked a prisoner out of his camp by forgery and boldness. We have made him run; he had to swim for it. And I know Cæsar!"

"A pity we didn't catch him!"

"Aye, I am ashamed!" Tros ground his teeth. "And what shall I say to Caswallon, who lent me a hundred gentlemen to take Cæsar alive! Half of them dead or wounded—no plunder—nothing to show him but my father's corpse, for which I must beg obsequies!"

"Caswallon will remember who wrecked Cæsar's ships off Kent a while ago. You saved Britain for us, Tros. Caswallon will not forget that."

But Tros smiled sourly. "It is only grudges that endure. Kings' memories are as short as Cæsar's for a friendship."

Orwic, too weak to argue, lay down near the lee rail, hugging himself in his cloak. Not long ago he had ridden in triumph to Lunden to announce Cæsar's hurried midnight retreat from Britain; he relished no more than Tros did the prospect of slinking up Thames with nothing to show but a foreigner's corpse to offset more than sixty dead and wounded gentlemen.

Mere seamen would hardly have mattered; but by the irony of fate not one of the twenty hirelings had suffered a scratch, except when Tros and Conops hit them with belaying pins or knife-hilts to stir their energy. In a sense Orwic was as much responsible as Tros; it was he who had supported Tros first and last; he was second-in-command of the expedition. Worse! The Lunden girls had seen the bireme off; they would be waiting now to kiss victorious warriors—expecting to see Cæsar brought forth from the hold in chains.

Instead of Cæsar in his scarlet cloak they would see dead and wounded friends—relations—lovers.

Orwic was as young and as imaginative as the girls who reckoned him the bravest man in Britain.

Tros gave the helm to Conops, his Greek freed-man, whose one eye, keener than a gimlet, betrayed one sole emotion just then—curiosity. He looked comical in an imitation of a Roman tunic, with his red Greek seaman's cap pulled low over his brow, an impudent nose beneath it, and a slit lip that showed one eye-tooth like a dog's.

To him nothing mattered except that his master Tros was alive and in command. He worshipped Tros, regarded him, young as he was, as the greatest seaman in the world; and seamanship, in Conops' view, was much the greatest of all attributes; any fool could stand or run on dry land, but it called for something superhuman to control a storm-tossed ship in chartless seas, bully a mutinous crew and make a landfall after days and nights of beating against headwinds under a viewless sky.

Conops was merely curious to know what was to happen next; he had perfect confidence in Tros' ability to meet it. Hardship meant no more to him than other men's feelings or opinions; his whole interest in living was to serve Tros loyally; the one reward he craved, a nod from Tros, maybe a smile, and a word or two of terse, ungilded praise.

"Keep the wind at the back of your right ear," Tros commanded. "The tide 'll be slack in an hour; watch for the surf on the quicksands* on your starboard bow. Keep

*Calais.

*The Goodwin Sands, which in those days were an island surrounded by shoal-water.

clear of that, and follow the tide around the coast when it starts to make. If there's any trouble with the crew, wake me."



HE WENT below, into the cabin where his father's body lay on Cæsar's bed, with Cæsar's scarlet cloak spread over it. And for a while he stood steadying himself with one hand on an overhead beam, watching the old man's face, that was as calm as if Cæsar's tortures had never racked the seventy-year-old limbs, the firm, proud lip showing plainly through the white beard, the eyes closed as in sleep, the aristocratic hands folded on the breast.

It was dark in there and easy to imagine things. The body moved a trifle in time to the ship's swaying.

"Sleep on!" Tros muttered.

He could not imagine his father dead, not even with the corpse before his eyes. No sentiment, not much emotion, had been lost between them. Tros actually loved his father more that minute than he had ever done. As a prince of Samothrace, deep in the Inner Mysteries, old Perseus had had scant respect for the claims of human personality, reckoning himself—as he was reckoned by the hierarchs—a failure to the extent that he had married and begotten a son, who might add to the afflictions of the world. He had spared no pains to educate that son, teaching him mastery of fear—since no man may escape fear, but a few may learn to rise triumphant over it—and above all, seamanship; but he had conceded nothing to the claims of mere human affection.

Not once had he tempted Tros to take the vow of an initiate, although that was his heart's desire, as Tros well understood. The first law of the Mysteries forbade the use of even the slightest influence, as between father and son for instance, to induce any one to become a candidate for initiation, and Tros had taken full advantage of that. He felt no impulse to devote himself to esoteric aims. He could not stomach non-resistance. His father had died not cursing and not blessing Cæsar, who tortured him, but utterly indifferent to Cæsar's crimes provided his own acts should pass the critical judgment of his own conscience. Tros on the other hand ached for revenge and determined to have it.

He could not have explained why. He had inherited his father's passion for free will and full responsibility, each man for his own acts. He did not question his father's right to submit to torture rather than reveal to Cæsar the least hint of what the secrets of the Samothracian and Druidic Mysteries really were; he would have done the same himself.

Nor did he question his father's right to be unvindictive; he was rather proud of the old man's conquest over self to the point where he could suffer torture and not shriek for vengeance or slaver with sickening meekness. He was immensely proud to be the old man's son.

Yet love him, in any ordinary sense, he knew he never had done; and, strangely enough, he hardly hated Cæsar. He was the enemy of Cæsar; he despised his vices and admired his genius, loathed his cruelty and liked his gentlemanly wit.

Old Perseus had been no man's enemy but all the world's friend, reserving his own right to be its friend in his own way. Tros gloried in being the enemy of Cæsar, of Rome, of any man or any power that dared to come between him and the freedom of earth and sea that his heart told him was a free man's heritage.

He fell asleep at once and his dreams were all of Cæsar, Cæsar standing on the bireme's bow in the mist at Seine-mouth, laughing, charmingly sarcastic, promising to crucify him by and by, plunging beneath a flight of arrows into the waves and continuing to laugh out of a fog-bank while the bireme pitched over the shoals at river-mouth and left Cæsar swimming safely out of reach.

He did not sleep long. He heard Conops shout from the poop and sprang out of the cabin sword in hand ready to deal with mutiny. But there was no mutiny. Conops and a dozen Britons were staring at a Gaulish fishing boat not far astern that looked as if it had been rebuilt by Roman engineers; it was plunging in masses of spray toward the British coast, making for Hythe in all likelihood.

"See the way they handle her!" Conops sneered. "Romans, or I'll eat my knife-hilt! Put about, master, and let's ram them! Did you ever see such landlubbers! Can't even quarter the sea! Straight from point to point like a plowshare into a field of turnips! There—they swamp!"

But the boat was decked, and the deck must have been strong and watertight. She

rose out of a welter of gray sea, dismasted but right side up, and Tros could see men, who certainly were Romans, chopping at the riggmg with their short swords.

"Go about and ram them!" Conops urged again, and Tros considered that for a minute. But he would likely enough lose his own sail if he tried to turn into the wind.

"They'll smash on the rocks when the tide carries them inshore," he prophesied and went below again to make up arrears of sleep.

He did not wake again until nightfall, when he relieved Conops at the helm. By that time the tide had carried them well out into the North Sea. The wind backed suddenly to the northwest, increasing in strength, and he had to heave to.

There were no stars visible, no moon, nothing to do but pace the poop to keep warm, judging the drift by the feel of the wind, with the cries of the wounded and the thought of that Gaulish-Roman fishing-boat with her Roman crew, to haunt and worry him.

Tros tried to persuade himself that the boat could not be Cæsar's. But calculations, made and checked a dozen times, assured him that Cæsar would have had time to reach Caritia by chariot from Seinemouth and to send that boat in the teeth of the gale across the Channel; in fact, he would have had about two hours to spare, which was ample in which to choose and instruct men for his purpose, whatever that might be.



BLACK night on a raging sea was neither time nor place for shrewd guessing at Cæsar's newest strategy, but Tros did not doubt it would run true to form and be brilliant if nothing else. To land a dozen Romans openly on the shore of Britain would be madness; if they were not killed instantly they would be held as hostages. Direct overtures to Caswallon would be laughed at—Cæsar would not try any such foolishness as to send messengers to Lunden. What then?

Cæsar's notorious luck would probably throw up his men all living on the beach, or might even cause the mastless boat to drift into a sheltered cove. What then? What then?

Even supposing that boat should have been lost with all hands, the fact remained that Cæsar was attempting something. He would persist. He would send another boat. For what purpose? To avenge himself on Tros undoubtedly, but how?

Cæsar played politics like a game, staking kingdom against kingdom. Incredibly daring and swift decisions were the secret of his campaigns; but there was something else, and as Tros paced the poop, wet to the skin with spray, he tried to analyze what he knew of Cæsar, knowing he must outguess him if he hoped to escape the long reach of his arm.

He tried for a while to imagine himself in Cæsar's place; but that was difficult; the very breath Tros breathed was the antithesis of Cæsar's. Cæsar yearned to impose the Roman yoke on all the world; Tros burned to see a world of free men, in which each man ruled himself and minded his own business.

It was that thought, presently, that gave him what he thought might be the key. Well-bred, vain, self-seeking rascal though Cæsar was, there was something splendid in his method, something admirable in his constancy of purpose and in his ability to make men serve him in the teeth of suffering and death. What was it? In what way was Cæsar different from other men?

His vices were unspeakable; his treachery was a byword; his extravagance was an insult to the men who died for him and to the nations from whom he extorted money with which to bribe Rome's politicians. He had personal charm, but that was not enough; men grow weary of a rogue, however successful and however personally charming. There was some other secret.

And at last it seemed to Tros he had it! Rome! The glamour of the word Rome. The idea of Rome as mistress of the world, with all men paying tribute to her—one law, one senate, one arbiter of quarrels, one fountain-head of authority. A sort of imitation of Nature, with the fundamental truth of brotherhood and freedom left out! Cæsar served his own ends, but he served Rome first; he might loot Rome and make himself her despot, but he would leave her mistress of the world.

No other people, possibly no other man than Cæsar had that obsession fixed so thoroughly in mind that he himself was almost the idea. Foreigners might send their spies to Rome, and bribe her public men almost openly, but none could set

Roman against Roman when Rome's profit was in question. On the other hand, Rome sent spies, or openly acknowledged agents, and successfully set tribe against tribe, faction against faction, until domestic strife ensued, and Rome stepped in and conquered.

The Britons, for instance, were divided into petty kingdoms, jealous of their own kings. Caswallon,* who had defeated Cæsar with Tros' help and sent him sneaking back to Gaul by night, had been at his wits' end to raise an army, even for that purpose. The half of one British tribe, the Atrebates, lived in Gaul and had accepted Cæsar's rule, under a king of Cæsar's making.

The Iceni traded horses to the men of Kent, but fought them between-times; and as far as the other British tribes were concerned, they were to all intents and purposes foreigners, loosely united by occasional marriages but with no real bond other than Druidism.

The Druids taught brotherhood, it was true; but that was too easily interpreted to mean friendship toward foreigners and strife at home.

The only enemy the Britons really held in common was the Northmen, who plundered the coasts whenever their own harvests failed or their own young men grew restless to wed foreign wives. But the Britons made friends with the Northmen, intermarried with them, let prisoners settle in their midst, and absorbed them, without making them feel they were a part of one united nation.

Self-seeking rogue though he was, then, Cæsar was Rome, to all intents and purposes; or so Tros argued it. Britain was a loosely knitted congeries of tribes, without any central authority, governed by chiefs who were hard put to it to have their own way, suspicious of one another. Cæsar, driven out of Britain, being Cæsar, would never rest until he had reversed defeat.

Therefore, that boat, undoubtedly containing Romans, must be a move in Cæsar's game, a move that would mean nothing else but an attempt to set Britons against Britons, since that was all a handful of men could do in an enemy country.

But Cæsar never neglected himself or his own feuds while he spread Rome's power abroad. He never failed to follow up his threats; never neglected to avenge a personal defeat. He was not only Rome, he was Cæsar.

Tros had laughed at him, had tricked him, prisoner away, had fooled him; out-guessed him, drowned a hundred men and almost caught Cæsar himself. It was safe, then, to wager that, coming so swiftly after that encounter, the gale-swept Gaulish fishing-boat in some way was connected with revenge on Tros.



SPIES might have told a great deal; but Cæsar was astute enough in any event to guess how strongly Tros stood in Caswallon's favor, and successful guile delighted Cæsar even more than winning battles.

It was not unreasonable to suppose that Cæsar had sent messengers in that boat—no doubt with expensive presents—to tell tales that should reach Caswallon's ears.

As he turned that over in his mind and calculated how much time the Roman messengers would have for intrigue—supposing that dismasted boat to have reached the coast—Tros almost made up his mind to run for the Belgian lowlands and seek refuge there. He did not doubt he could make good friends among the Belgæ.

All that restrained him was his own pride. He had made a promise to Caswallon; he would keep it. Those young gallants who had sailed with him—mutinous cockerels—had their rights; their dead should be buried in British earth.

But he almost wished the gods might relieve him of responsibility by sinking the bireme in that raging sea, that pitched and rolled her, wind across the tide, burying her bow in smothering green water as she lurched unsteadily to leeward, tossing the wounded about in the hold and shaking her spar and fighting-top until it was a mystery why the mast did not go overboard.

The gods—the pantheon of gods he sensed around him—knew drowning was no enviable death; but neither was the prospect anything but vile, of groaning wearily up Thames-mouth in a damaged ship, with two-thirds of her complement dead or wounded, their friends, expectant of victory, waiting to receive them, and a possibility, almost probable, that Cæsar's messengers had already bribed or cozened influential Britons into a distrustful, if not an openly hostile frame of mind.

*By the Romans called Cassivelaunus.

was quite willing to drown just then, ded he might go down handsomely.

wic frankly friendly, throwing off the sickness and gathering strength for an- her dive into the hold to tend the wound- , was aware of Tros' quandary and did his best to encourage him.

"Lud of Lunden is a good god. He will send us an achievement!" he yelled in Tros' ear, then swung himself down from the poop and disappeared in darkness.

"Achievment!" Tros muttered. "And thirty seasick men to wrest it from destiny! We will all do well if we achieve a decent death!"

For the first time in his life he had begun to think that destiny might be his enemy and not his friend; that Cæsar, the Romans, Rome, might be fortune's favorites and he and his friends, the Britons, nothing but grist in the eternal mill.

The wind shrieked through the rigging; bitter cold spray drenched him. He had to cling to the rail, and his eyes ached, staring at stark, dark seas that pitched the bireme like a cork.

"I will die free. I will set others free. I must! I burn to live! But is it all worth the burning?" he wondered.

CHAPTER II

NORTHMEN!

ANOTHER day and another night of plunging in a confusing sea, hove-to half the time, cheating wind and tide by miracles of seamanship, found Tros wide-eyed at the helm and the bireme's bow headed at last into the hump-backed waves that guarded the Thames estuary.

There was no land in sight, but there were sea-birds and a hundred other signs that gave Tros the direction; he had run in the dark before a blustering wind, had caught the tide under him at dawn and was making the most of it, sure he was in mid-stream and as confident as a homing-pigeon of his exact position, well along into the Thames.

It was cold, and the wind bore rain with it that drenched the autumn air and settled into banks of blowing mist through which the watery sun appeared over the stern like dim, discouraged lantern-light. The wind howled through the rigging and the sea swished through the remnants of the basket-work that Tros had rigged around the bireme to make her look larger than she was. The great ungainly ram sploshed in the steep waves like a harpooned monster, and now and then the Britons, down in the hold, screamed from the torture of ill-tended wounds.

Conops relieved Tros at the helm, nodding when told to keep in midtide and to watch for land on the starboard bow. There was a Briton at the mast-head, one of the crew of fishermen who had been brought along to handle the sail; but he was afraid of the souls of the dead gentlemen on deck; and nobody, least of all himself, had any confidence in him. Tros went forward, to lean over the bow and think.

He could not throw off despondency. He began to wonder whether his father had not been right in saying that a man's delight in action was no better than the animals', that his brain was only a mass of instincts magnified, and that the soul was the only part of him worth cultivating.

There lay his father, dead, contented to be dead, with no man's injury to his discredit, having died without regret for unattained ambition, since he had none of the ordinary sort. His father, with all the resources of the Mysteries of Samothrace to count on, had never owned a house; even the stout ship, that Cæsar had ordered burned for the copper she contained, had hardly been his property, though he had built her and commanded her; he had regarded her as a gift to the Lords of Samothrace, at whose behest she had sailed uncharted seas.

But the father had never ached for action as the son did. Tros had the same compelling impulse to uphold the weak and to defy the strong, but he had a more material way of doing it. He could not see the sense of talking, when a blow, well aimed, might break a tyrant's head. Nor was he totally opposed to tyrants; an alert and generously guided tyranny appealed to him as something the world needed: a tyranny that should insist, with force, on freedom.

"Is there anything more tyrannous than truth?" he wondered, watching the waves yield and reappear over the ironshod ram.

Even his father had had to admit that a ship, for instance, could not be managed without despotism. There had never lived a sterner ship's commander than old Perseus; just though he had been and

self-controlled, he was a captain who would brook no hesitation in obeying orders. Yet his father had failed, if the loss of his ship at Cæsar's hands, followed by torture and death, were failure.

Not even the Druids of Gaul, for whose encouragement his father had set forth from Samothrace, had gained in the least, as far as Tros could see; and if that was not failure, what was it? Yet his father had seemed quite contented with the outcome, had died appearing to believe his failure was success.

Had he, Tros, not the same right to believe this comparative failure against Cæsar was good fortune in disguise? It was only comparative failure after all. Cæsar had had the worst of it, twice. Once he had wrecked the greater part of Cæsar's fleet and saved Britain from his clutches. Then he had thoroughly worsted Cæsar in the fight at Seine-mouth. His father had never done anything as effective as that.

And yet, he, Tros, was miserable; and his father had died contented. He, Tros, had a chest full of Cæsar's gold, more money than most kings saw in a lifetime; his father had never had money enough to do more than keep a little ship well husbanded.

His father had hardly seemed to suffer when the ship was burned and her good, resourceful crew were beaten to death before his eyes by Cæsar's order: whereas he, Tros, who had not witnessed that cruelty, had writhed at the very thought of it and was sick at heart now because two-score friendly young Britons lay wounded in the hold. Was his father's attitude the right one? Or was his? Or were they both wrong?

Why, for instance, had his father taught him swordsmanship, if fighting was an insult to the soul, as he contended? Must a man learn how to do things, and then restrain himself from doing them? If so, why do anything? Why preach? Why eat and drink? Why live? What was the use of knowing how to sail a ship, if action was discreditable? Was war against the elements so different from war with men? Should he have let the sea win and have drowned, too proud to fight?

He thought not. He remembered how his father used to fight the elements; there had been no bolder seaman in the world. What then? Ought all men to be seamen and spend life defeating wind and tide? The mere suggestion was ridiculous. Nine men out of ten were as utterly incapable of seamanship as they were of penetrating the Inner Mysteries and living such a life as Perseus led. Besides, if all did one thing, who should do the other things that needed doing?



SLOWLY, very slowly, as he leaned over the bow and watched the changing color of the estuary water, Tros began to solve the riddle—of the universe, it seemed to him.

"A man is not a man until he feels the manhood in him," he reflected. "Then he does what he can do."

That seemed to be the whole of it. Each to his own profession, born leaders in the van, born blacksmiths to the anvil, born adventurers toward the skyline—he for one!—and each man fighting to a finish with whatever enemy opposed him, that enemy on every battlefield himself, no other!

Good! Tros stiffened his huge muscles and his leonine eyes began to gleam under the shaggy brows. There was dignity in that warfare, purpose and plan sufficient, if one should rule himself so manfully in every chance-met circumstance that victory were his, within himself, no matter what the outcome!

And now he remembered Perseus' dying speech, and how the old man had forbidden nothing, not even the sword, but had prophesied for Tros a life of wandering and many another brush with Cæsar. He and Cæsar were to help each other some day!

"Gods! What a prospect!"

Cæsar stood for all that Tros loathed: Interference with men's liberties, imposition of a foreign yoke by trickery and force of arms, robbery under the cloak of law, vice and violence, lies gilded and painted to resemble truth. And he was to help Cæsar! Some day!

He laughed. Yet he believed in death-bed prophecies. The thought encouraged him.

"If I am to help Cæsar, and he me, then my time to die is not yet. For I will injure him with all my might and main until my whole mind changes!"

He reflected that it takes time for a man's inclination to change to that extent.

"My will is not the wind!" he muttered. "I will live long before I befriend Cæsar!"

The wind changed while he thought of it, veering to the southward, blowing all the mist toward the northern riverbank until

At last the sun shone on a strip of dark-green where the forest touched the tide-mud and Conops cried "Land-ho!" from the poop.

Swiftly then, that being Britain and the autumn, magic went to work on land-and sea-scape that changed until both wide-flung riverbanks gleamed in sunlight and the heaving estuary-bosom frilled itself with ripples in place of whitecaps on the surface of the waves.

Gray water brightened to steel-blue, stained with brown mud where the tide poured over shoals, and the sea-gulls came off-shore in thousands to pounce on mussel-beds before the tide should cover them.

Then another hail from Conops, and Tros returned to the poop, his mood changing with the weather. He was already whistling to himself.

"Yonder!" said Conops, nodding, his one eye staring upriver. "Too much smoke!"

"Mist!" remarked Orwic, but the wish was father to the contradiction.

He had seen that kind of smoke before; had more than one scar to show for it. One did not admit, until sure, that Northmen might be raiding British homesteads.

"Smoke!" Tros announced after a minute. He could almost smell it. "Orwic! Caswallon shall welcome us after all!"

Orwic shouted. A dozen Britons came out of the hold, to cluster on the poop and stare at the smudge on the skyline. They were handsome, bluntly spoken youngsters, dressed in plundered Roman armor that made the long hair over their shoulders look incongruous — easy-mannered gentlemen, who had twice had the best of Cæsar and were therefore more than usually ready to assert their views. Besides, they were no longer seasick, and were annoyed with Tros, who had compelled them to obey him but had failed to capture Cæsar.

"Northmen!" announced one of them, with an air of being able to read smoke on the skyline as if it were Celtic script. "Those two longships Tros refused to fight the other day have found their way up-Thames! It's Tros' fault! They have stolen a march while we plucked his oat-cake out of Cæsar's fire! By Lud of Lunden, we were fools to trust a foreigner!"

"Aye, and Lunden burning!" said another.

But that was nonsense; the smoke was much nearer than Lunden.

"Two longships and only thirty of us fit to fight!"

"Tros will want to run away again!" a third suggested.

Conops bared his teeth and Orwic, who had led an earlier mutiny to his own distress, made signals; but they deferred no more to Orwic than to Tros. Orwic was only Caswallon's nephew; they were as good as he, and equally entitled to opinions. Besides, as second-in-command, Orwic was responsible along with Tros for failure to capture Cæsar, and that, added to jealousy, was excuse enough for ignoring his signals.

"Any man can sail a ship upriver!" one of them suggested brazenly.

Tros almost brayed astonishment. He had thought he had tamed those cockerels! Cold, seasickness and battle on the deck had reduced the hired crew to the condition of whipped dogs, but these young aristocrats appeared to recover their nerve the moment they smelt a Northman!

It had not yet filtered into Tros' understanding how warfare with the men from over the North Sea was a heritage, almost a privilege, a sport, in which serfs were the prizes and women the side-bets. To mention Northmen near the coast of Britain was like talking wolf to well-trained hounds.

"Caswallon gave the command of this ship to Tros," said Orwic, standing loyally by his appointed chief.

Whereat they laughed. They were in their own home waters; not Caswallon himself might overrule their free wills! Each man thrilled to one and the same impulse. Some of the wounded crawled on deck and, learning what the commotion was about, cried out to Tros to get after the Northmen instantly, hoof, hair and teeth!

"I, too, am minded to make the acquaintance of these Northmen!" Tros remarked; and they grinned, although they did not quite believe him; from what they already knew of him, he was too cautious and conservative to lead them into the kind of fight they craved.

"We will introduce you!" a youngster answered, twisting his long mustache. "We will show you what fighting is!"

"*You!*" Tros answered; and they all backed forward along the poop because his sword was drawn, although none saw it whip out of the sheath. With his left hand he picked up a Roman shield.

"Orwic! Stand by!"

Orwic obeyed. Tros had beaten him roundly once and they had pledged their faith to each other afterward on that swaying poop on the dark sea off the coast of Gaul. The other Britons began to jeer at Orwic, although they chose their words, for he had been first into the sea at Cæsar's men when the Romans invaded Britain, and there was none but Tros who had ever beaten him on horse or foot.

"Silence!" Tros thundered, tapping with his sword-point on the deck.

One or two laughed, but rather feebly, and they all grew still before the rapping ceased, most of them clutching at their daggers, glancing at one another sidewise.

"Must I teach you young cockerels another lesson? Lud of Lunden! How many arrows have you? Not a hundred! You squandered arrows against Cæsar by the basketful! Do you think Northmen will stand still to have their throats cut? Idiots!"

"We know how to fight Northmen," one man piped up. "We'll show you!"

"You? Show me?" Tros thundered.

He took a long stride forward and they backed away, uncomfortably close now to the poop edge; there was no rail there to lean against.

"By Lud, I'll beat the brains out of the first who speaks again without my leave!" He meant it, and they knew it. "Who has anything to say?"

His swordblade flickered like a serpent's tongue; he seemed able to meet all eyes simultaneously.

"Who speaks?" he repeated; but none answered him.

They could back away no farther; to advance meant instant death to two or three at any rate, and whether or not Orwic should take Tros' side.

"At your hands I have suffered failure!" Tros went on. "It carks in me. I went for Cæsar. I bring back dead and wounded men. Whose fault is that? Yours, you disobedient young ——! By the gods who grinned when you wasted arrows, it shall be my fault if I fail again! Now hear me! Not a man aboard this bireme shall see Lunden until we beat the Northmen first! Who questions that?"

He paused dramatically, but there was no answer. He had stolen their thunder by threatening to do what they had first proposed, like yielding to a wrestler's hold in order to upset him.

"Less than a hundred arrows! Not one throwing-spear! A torn sail! Two-score swordsmen fit to stand up! You have nothing but me to depend on! Eat that! Any one question it?"

"You can handle the ship," said one of them.

He seemed afraid to hear his own voice.

"Can I?" Tros' voice rang with irony. "Does any of you question that I will?"

"Come! No ill-temper, Tros! Nobody doubts your seamanship," another man piped up. "We have had proof enough of that."

"Not proof enough! Nay, by Lud of Lunden, not yet enough! Seamanship includes the art of choking mutiny! Who doubts that I command this ship and every Briton in her? Speak up! Who doubts it? I will abolish doubt!"

"Caswallon gave you the command. That is all right," said one of them. "Only lead us against the Northmen, that is all."

"Lead? I will drive you!" Tros retorted. "Stand out, the man who thinks I can't! Come on and let's settle the question! What? Haven't I a rival? Down off my poop then! Down you go!"

He strode toward them, point-first, and they scrambled off the poop in laughter at their own defeat. So Tros saw fit to smile too, as they crowded in the waist to hear the rest of what he had to say.

"Northmen!" he laughed, pecking at the planking with his sword-point. "I will give you such a bellyful of Northmen as you never dreamed! To your benches now! Out oars!"



AND they obeyed him. They had promised they would row when called on. They had disobeyed him more than once, and it was true that they had squandered ammunition contrary to orders—true that, unless he could think of some expedient, they would be helpless against the two or three hundred men the Northmen probably could muster.

But they also obeyed because it dawned on them that Tros was sick at heart from having lost so many men without a victory to show for it, and that he was bent on snatching a revenge from destiny.

Thirteen oars aside began to thump in unison, not adding much to the bireme's speed, but adding a great deal to the unanimity; and presently Tros added twenty

more, compelling the hired seamen to man the empty benches, taking the helm himself, leaving Conops and Orwic free to man the sheets. The wind was falling, so that the sail flapped half of the time, but the tide served and with forty-six oars the headway was good enough.

Tros did not want to move too fast. He had never fought Northmen, although Caswallon and Orwic had told him of their methods—how they usually landed from two ships on two sides of a village and fought their way toward each other, burning as they went, to create a panic.

And he knew the British method of opposing them, by throwing fire into their ships if they could come alongside, and by cutting down trees in the forest for a rampart against them when they landed and advanced on foot.

The hundred young men he had taken with him on his venture against Cæsar constituted practically the whole of Caswallon's available fighting force in any sudden emergency. Excepting Lunden, which was only a little place, there were no towns from which to draw levies at a moment's notice; British settlements were scattered and Britons disinclined to obey their chief unless they saw good and sufficient reason for it, so it would take time to summon an army and Caswallon was probably in desperate straits.

It was late in the year for Northman raids, but if these were the two ships that Tros had refused to fight in the Channel on his way to attack Cæsar they might be on one of their usual plundering expeditions; in which case they would be in force and with their line of retreat extremely alertly guarded. Thirty men would be next to useless as an independent force against them and the only hope would be to reach Caswallon somehow and support him.

But it might be that the Northmen's home harvests had failed and they were up to their old game of wintering in Britain, doing all the damage within reach in order to force an armistice and contributions of supplies. In that event they would not be considering retreat, their ships might be unguarded and it might be possible to come on them unawares.

It seemed to Tros, and Orwic confirmed the opinion, that the smoke came from both sides of the river. The man at the masthead was equally sure of it, and those were his home waters; he knew every contour of the Thames.

That might mean that the Northmen were divided, one ship's crew plundering on either bank; which was likely enough, since it would be good strategy, obliging Caswallon to divide his own forces and making it more difficult for him to gather men into one managable unit. The Britons were probably in scattered tens and dozens being beaten in detail for lack of one directing mind.

"A man does what he can," Tros reflected, glancing upward at the heavy fighting-top, that might be visible from a long way off upriver.

He called the man down from the masthead, then turned to Orwic.

"You and Conops take axes. Cut the shrouds on the port side. Then chop the mast down!"

He called the hired seamen away from the oars, lowered and stowed the sail, set ten of them to hauling on the starboard shrouds and gave the word to Orwic. Three dozen ax-strokes and the mast went over with a crash, increasing the damage to the bulwark done by Cæsar's grapnels. Swiftly they chopped away the starboard rigging and Tros sent the seamen below to their oars again.

"And now," said Orwic, "I obeyed you, but I don't know why! Without a sail how can we attack two swift ships?"

Tros was not fond of explanations; they are usually bad for discipline; but he conceded something to Orwic's prompt obedience, which was a novelty to be encouraged.

"We should have lost the wind around the next bend anyhow. I would have had to take men from the oars to man sheets and braces. The Northmen are faster; we couldn't have run, sail or no sail. Gather all the arrows into one basket, set that by the starboard arrow-engine, and listen to me! I'll kill you if you loose one flight before I give the word!"

He did not dare to use the bull-hide drum to set time for the rowing, for the sound of a drum carries farther over water than the thump of oars between the thole-pins; he had to rely on gestures and his voice.

The bireme was in midtide, gliding upriver rapidly; the shore was narrowing in on either hand, with shoal-water projecting nearly into midstream at frequent intervals. The smoke of two burning villages, a

dozen miles apart and one on either side of the river, was already diminishing from brown to gray and the nearest—not two miles up-river—appeared of the two to be the more burnt out. Tros began to whistle to himself.



BETWEEN the bireme and the nearest smoke there was a belt of trees that crept down to the river's edge on the starboard hand. The trees were lower near the water, but even so, now that the mast was gone, they formed an effective screen behind which he could approach without giving warning because the deep-water channel followed the bank closely.

"Orwic," he said quietly, "your Lud of Lunden is a good god, and the Northmen are on both sides of the river! Listen!"

A horn-blast and then another rang through the woods on the starboard hand. They were answered by two more, from not far away.

"Are those British signals?"

"No," said Orwic.

"The tide will serve us for an hour. How many arrows have we?"

"Ninety."

"Save them!"

Away in the distance, from across the river, came the faint sound of several horns blown simultaneously.

"Britons?" asked Tros.

"Northmen."

Tros laughed.

"Caswallon has them checked, I take it! They are summoning their friends!"

He sent Conops to stand below the poop and signal to the oarsmen to dip slowly, quietly. He only needed steerage-way; the tide was carrying the bireme fast enough, perhaps too fast. There was nothing but guesswork until they should pass that belt of trees.

The shoal-mud formed an island nearly in midriver, half submerged, and between that and the land the tide poured in a surging brown stream. There was no room to maneuver, hardly room to have swung a longship with the aid of anchors. A little higher up, beyond the belt of trees, the mud-bank vanished under water and there was room enough there for a dozen ships to swing; deep enough water almost from bank to bank the full width of the river. Tros tried to form a mental picture of the river-bank at that point, but he had seen it only once before as he passed it on the outward journey.

"Is there a creek just beyond those trees?" he asked Orwic.

Orwic asked the man who had been at the masthead.

"Yes, a narrow creek. Fairly deep water."

Another horn-blast echoed through the trees. It seemed to come from close to the riverbank and was answered instantly. Like the echo to that from away up-river came a chorus of six horns blown in unison. There began loud shouting from somewhere just beyond the trees and, presently, the unmistakable thump and rattle of oars being laid in rowlocks. A moment later Tros' ear caught the steady, short stroke of deep-sea rowing, such as men use where the waves are steep and close together.

"Now!" he shouted. "Give way!"

There was nothing for it now but speed. If he had the Northmen trapped they were at his mercy; if he had guessed wrong, then the bireme was at theirs. He beat the bull-hide drum and bellowed to his fifty rowers:

"One! Two! One! Two! One! Two!"

Shouts responded from around the tree-clad corner of the bank, shouts and a mighty splashing as a helmsman tried to swing a longship in a hurry out of the creek-mouth bow-first to the tide, backing the port oars.

"Row, you Britons! Row!" Tros thundered, taking the helm from Conops.

He could hear the water boiling off the bireme's ram, and in his mind's eye he could see the Northmen's whole predicament, with no room to maneuver and a strong tide hitting them beam-on as they left the creek-mouth. He could hear their captain bellowing, heard the oar-beat change and knew the longship was attempting, too late, to turn upstream and run from the unseen enemy.

And it was better than he hoped! As the bireme's bow raced past the belt of trees the longship lay with her nose toward the midstream mud-bank, starboard oars ahead and port oars backing frantically, blue mud boiling all around her and panic on deck as a dozen men struggled to hoist the sail to help her swing. She was less than a hundred yards away! Tros could have sunk her, with that tide under him, without troubling the oars at all!

He beaked her stark amidships. As the

Northmen loosed one wild volley of arrows, the iron-shod ram crashed in under the bilge and rolled her over, ripping out fifty feet of planking from her side. The shock of the collision threw the rowers from the benches and the bireme swung on the tide with her stern-post not a dozen feet away from the edge of the midstream shoal, then drifted up-stream with wreckage trailing from her bow and the wounded crying that she leaked in every seam.



TROS sent Conops below to discover what the damage really amounted to, and watched the Northmen. Their longship had gone under sidewise, so that not even her mast was visible. Most of her men were drowning; some had struggled to the mud bank, where the yielding mud sucked them under. Others, trying to make the creek-mouth, were being carried upstream by the tide; not many were swimming strongly enough to have any prospect of reaching shore. And as if they had been hiding in fox-holes, Britons began appearing from between the trees gathering in excited groups to cut down the survivors.

"The collision opened up her seams. I doubt she'll float as far as Lunden!" Conops announced.

"How much water has she made yet?"

"Half a cubit, master."

"Orwic, take some of the wounded and man the water-hoist!"

So they rigged the trough amidships, and the beam with a bucket at either end that was the Roman ship designers' concept of a pump.* Tros swung the bireme's head up-stream and began to consider that other smudge of brown smoke, half-a-dozen or more miles away.

"Now, if Lud of Lunden really is a good god," he remarked to Orwic, "we will catch another longship on our ugly snout without wasting a single arrow!"

"We might pray to Lud," Orwic suggested.

"No," said Tros. "The gods depise a man who prays. They help men who make use of opportunity. Get below there!"

The oarsmen were all leaning overside to watch the Northmen being cut down by Britons as they struggled through the muddy shallows close by the riverbank.

* It looked something like a modern "Walking-beam." A man stood at each end, who tipped the water out of the buckets into the trough that carried it overside.

"Man the benches! Out oars! I'll show you a fight to suit you between here and Lunden Town!"

CHAPTER III

BATTLE!

IT WAS a desperate, dinning fight that raged to the south of the river and a few miles south of Lunden. The tide slackened and began to change; the bireme made slow progress; it was a long time before Tros made out the mast of another longship between the trees ahead of him. But long before that he could hear and see trees falling, as the Britons felled them in the Northmen's path. Orwic kept up a running comment:

"That's a good joke! They have burned Borsten's village; his father was a Northman! They'll have thought to scare Caswallon and force terms from him. Threats only make him fight! Did you see that tree fall? That's by Borsten's Brook. Caswallon has whipped a force together in the nick of time. He has them cut off from the river. There! another tree. They're ringing them around! Land us yonder, Tros; I know a short cut to where Caswallon stands praying to the gods for thirty extra men!"

"No!" Tros answered, with a jaw-snap that conveyed conviction.

Tros' eyes were on that longship. He lusted to possess it. It lay bow-out of water on the mud, with a kedge in mid-stream with which to haul off in a hurry in case of need. In all his wanderings he had never seen a ship with such sweet lines; she was almost the ship of his dreams—not big enough, but there were only three men guarding her and she would do for a beginning! One of the three men blew a horn-blast as he sighted the dismasted bireme. Tros' laugh was like an answering trumpet call; he knew that ship was his if only he could manage his excited Britons!

It was easy enough to read what had happened: A raiding party of Northmen caught ashore by the Britons and cut off from their ship; the men left to guard the ship summoned by horn to the rescue, only to find themselves in the same trap.

"The Britons will burn that ship, Lud rot them, unless I prevent!" Tros muttered.

But he was hard put to it to keep his own Britons rowing; they wanted to ram the

riverbank and leap ashore to help block the Northmen's retreat. Half of them at a time, and sometimes all of them, left the oars to lean over the bulwark and instruct Tros how to lead in to the bank; it was only when they saw the bireme drifting backward down the river that they returned to the oars reluctantly.

There began to be downright mutiny again; one man threw a lump of wood that missed Tros by a hair'sbreadth; the wounded crawled on deck and cursed him for a coward alien. He thundered on the drum for silence, gesturing to Conops at the helm to hold the bireme in midriver.

"You young fools!" he roared. "If you take their ship away, what have they left to retreat to?"

But they did not see the point. They wanted to rush to Caswallon's aid and share in the glory of cutting down the hereditary enemy. Three jumped overboard and swam for it.

"Back to your arrow-engine, Orwic! Shoot the next man who leaves his bench! Row or Lud rot you! One! Two! One! Two! Easy, starboard. Port ahead. Now, all together, back her!"

He swung the bireme's stern toward the longship's kedge-warp, and sent Conops overside to bend another warp to it, making that fast to the bireme's stern. Then—down-stream now—he bullied them all to rowing until the kedge came up and the bireme swayed like a pendulum in midstream, mud boiling all around her.

"Watch those three Northmen, Orwic! Shoot if they try to cast off!"

The longship heeled. Her bow began to swing round on the mud. Two of the three who guarded her ran to cut the kedge-warp with their swords.

"Shoot!"

Orwic loosed twelve arrows in one flight and one man fell; the other hid himself below the bulwarks; the third sprang to the longship's stern and hacked the warp through with a battle-ax, but too late; the ship slid off the mud at last and glided into midstream.

The bireme shot ahead when the warp parted; it was a minute before backed oars could take the way off her; then, port oars forward, starboard oars astern, Tros swung her in a circle in midstream.

Two minutes after that they broke three oars as the bireme bumped the longship and a dozen Britons led by Orwic jumped aboard. The two Norsemen took to the river like water-rats; four Britons plunged after them; Tros lashed the ships together, beam to beam and let them drift downriver with the tide, which set toward the south bank, away from the fighting.

A quarter of a mile downstream he dropped two anchors, he and Conops standing guard over the cables lest the indignant Britons should cut them and try to row across to the other side. Only Orwic, and he nervously, stood by him; the remainder, wounded included, threatened, threatened and cursed him for a flinching coward; but as they could not swim, they could not leave him.

Tros watched the far bank, trying to imagine what he himself would do if he were a Northman hemmed in by determined enemies and cut off from his ship. Those Northmen doubtless had a leader wise in war, chosen to lead raids because of previous successes.

He did not believe they would have landed without exploring all the riverbank; it was at least an even chance that the two who had swum for shore had reached their friends to warn them the ship was gone.

Orwic bit his fingernails, torn three ways between loyalty to Tros, anxiety for his friends ashore and eagerness to lead his own men into the thick of the fighting.

"By Lud, we will be too late!" he grumbled. "Too late! Too late! Tros——"

"If Caswallon can keep them away from the river, there's no need for us," Tros answered. "If they reach the river, they'll find boats and try to recapture their ship."

"But there aren't any boats!" Orwic objected.

"Then again, no need for us! But I will wager there are boats, among the reeds, and the Northmen know it."

"Then let's hunt for boats and burn them!"

Tros laughed.

"Set this crowd of ours ashore, and who'll keep them out of the fighting!"

The Britons, and some of the wounded with them, had nearly all jumped into the longship and were holding a sort of parliament, even the hired seamen taking part. An iron bolt hurled at Tros just missed him where he stood in the bireme's bow, and some one shouted—

"Cross the river, or we'll burn both ships!"



THEY had found the Northmen's fire-pot and meant business; there was smoke where half a dozen of them stooped over a box full of kindling, blowing on it. "By Pluto's teeth! Ye'll burn my prize of war?"

Tros would rather see a city burned than lose that sweet-lined ship! He leaped on the longship's bow, roared like a bull and charged them, scattering them right and left, kicking fire-pot and kindling overboard before they could draw their weapons; and by that time he had his back against the mast, the hilt of his long sword on a level with his chin, its point just sufficiently in motion to confirm the resolution in its owner's eye.

They were not afraid of him exactly. There was none, at that crisis, who would not have dared to try conclusions. They had all fought Romans on the Kentish beach, had beaten Cæsar's men at Seinemouth, had been trained, since they were old enough to hold a weapon, against the wolf, the Northmen and the neighboring British tribes.

Cowardice was their pet abomination. But he had them puzzled. They were Celts, hereditary gentlemen, much given to reflection and to arguing all sides of everything, deeply versed in chivalry and legend, and despising the notion of attacking one man in overwhelming numbers. Against any one except Northmen they preferred argument to violence. They admired him for his daring to defy them all.

Four of them kept him backed against the mast; six others engaged Conops in the longship's bow, fending off his vicious knife-thrusts, while two more hacked the cables through and set both ships adrift again.

But they drifted toward the wrong shore naturally, since the tide set that way.

Within a hundred yards they were aground on clinging mud, and in a moment after that there were only wounded left to reckon with, the remainder, hired seamen and all, had plunged overside and were struggling shoulder-deep to reach the swampy bank and hunt for boats, rafts, anything in which to cross the river.

Orwic hesitated. Tros took pity on him, and a shrewd thought for himself.

"Friend o' mine, I give you leave to go!" he said, laughing, and Orwic jumped overside without touching the bulwark.

"And so by law, if there is any law, the longship's mine!" Tros chuckled.

Some of the Britons began to swim across the river, using logs to help them breast the third of a mile of strong stream. Four men found a raft near the edge of the swamp and wasted several minutes arguing with seven wounded men who tried to take it from them, until Orwic arrived and seized command; he put the wounded on the raft and made the others help him swim the crazy thing.

Several men found horses—Britons could be trusted to smell a horse if there were one within five miles—and within fifteen minutes of the ships' touching the mud the last horse took the water with its long mane held by two men and a third—he had only one arm—clinging to its tail.

Battle raged unseen on the far bank, to the tune of horn-blasts and the crash of falling trees. Chariot and horseback fighting—the Britons' favorite method—had developed a type of defensive tactics to correspond; they were experts at felling trees in the path of an advancing or retreating enemy, ringing him around if possible, blocking the narrow forest paths and reenforcing the dense, tangled undergrowth with massive tree-trunks.

It was easy to read the wavering fortune of the battle by observing trees that fell, in different directions, three, four at a time.

Once it seemed as if the Northmen were surrounded, then as if they were making good retreat toward where they had left their longship. But that might have been a feint; the shouting and crashing changed direction; there followed a din of horn-blasts as the Britons reformed ranks and rushed to block a new line of retreat.

Once three Northmen, iron helmeted and armed with battle-axes, showed themselves on a bare hillock near by the ruins of a burned hut on the riverbank, but they were cut down instantly by a score of Britons who rushed out of the forest.

Once Tros thought he saw Caswallon, mounted, galloping along the river's edge to turn the Northmen's flank.

It was easy now to distinguish Norse from British horn-blasts; the Northmen's note was flat, blown on an ox-horn; the Britons used copper, and even silver instruments that rang through the woods with an exciting peal. Shouting and horn-blasts

signified that the Northmen had fought clear of the felled-tree barriers, were retiring in considerable number almost parallel with the riverbank, their right flank possibly two hundred yards away from it, with an apparently impenetrable thicket in between them and the river.

By the sound they were circling that thicket on the far side. The Britons were striving to crowd them against it.

Except for a few feet of stump-dotted marsh it reached almost to the water's edge —an obstacle to Briton and Northmen alike; but once or twice Tros could see Britons creeping into it to take the Northmen in flank or from the rear, armed with spears with which to thrust at the Northmen's backs from behind the cover of the undergrowth.

Once, about two score Britons tried to make their way between the river and the trees, jumping from clump to clump of turf and rotting roots, but the strip of marsh came to an end in knee-deep mud in which they floundered until they gave up the attempt and struggled back again to hack a path through the undergrowth toward the enemy's flank.

Ten minutes after that, the Northmen's strategy revealed itself. They fought their way around the thicket to a creek that Tros could not see because of intervening trees. The news that they had reached it was announced by a frantic chorus of British bugle-notes.

Another thirty or forty Britons charged along the riverbank and tried to force their way to the creek-mouth, but were prevented by the mud that grew deeper the farther they went, until some of them floundered to the breast in it and had to be hauled out by their friends.

And presently, from behind the trees that shut off Tros' view of the creek-mouth, three small boats emerged crowded with Northmen, towing others who clung to the boats' gunwales helping to shove the boats along until the water grew too deep.

The Northmen's shields were a solid phalanx, behind which they crouched in the boats, protecting the paddlers against British arrows. Some of the men in the water swam with shields over the heads, but some were already drowning. Tros counted nearly sixty men, and there more behind them, too late for the boats or crowded out, dodging missiles as they swam.



THEIR leader stood in the fr boat, a big man with long mus taches drooping to his chin and a bushy, clipped, red beard, young, hardly thirty by the look of him, but a giant in stature, with a head that drooped a little forward as if he were a habitual deep-thinker, or else wounded or very weary.

He was nearly a full head taller than the tallest of his men, two of whom stood beside him. Their eyes were on the Britons ashore, but his were on the longship. He stood recklessly, ignoring arrows, hardly troubling to raise the painted shield on his left arm. As the boats drew nearer Tros saw three women crouching among the men.

"If that chief loves a ship as I do, he will fight!" Tros said to Conops. "Swiftly bid our wounded show their heads above the bulwark."

The longship had had the inside berth when both ships took the mud, but the tide had carried their sterns around, pivoting them on the bireme's ram, which presently stuck fast, so that now both sterns were out into the stream, with the longship free except for the ropes that held her to the bireme's side.

Smashed oars, jammed between them, kept the ship's sides from grinding, and the water making in the bireme's hold brought her down by the stern, so that she lay now for two-thirds of her length on soft mud, immovable until they should pump the water out and the tide should turn again and lift her.

Tros climbed up to the bireme's poop, leaving Conops on the longship's bow, and carefully chose twelve arrows from the basket, laying them in the arrow-engine's grooves and cranking the clumsy mechanism that drew the bow taut. Then he studied the wounded, some of whom by using all their strength could hardly keep their heads above the bulwark; there was not one man among them fit for fighting; whoever could carry his weight had gone with Orwic to the battle in the woods.

"Men of Lunden," Tros said, for he knew they liked that better than if he had called them Britons, "we will burn both ships under us rather than let Northmen have them! But I think those Northmen have a bellyfull. Let your heads appear and reappear, as if there were a host of you crouching below the bulwark."

Many of them lacked strength to keep

eir chins above the bulwark for more than few seconds at a time. They raised their eads, let go, and struggled up again to atch the approaching boats, which came ery slowly, for lack of enough paddles and ecause of the overload and the strength of he tide in midstream.

On the far shore the Britons were using horses to drag felled trees into the water, laboring shoulder-deep to lash a raft together on which enough of them might cross to dare to give the Northmen battle.

But that was a work that required time; the Northmen had burned all the buildings within reach, so there were no doors or hewn timber available.

The Northmen appeared to have no information about arrow-engines, but they seemed to expect ordinary arrow-fire. As they won their way across-stream in slow procession, more than fifty yards apart, and the distance between them increasing, they kept their boats' heads pointed toward the ships' sterns to reduce the breadth of the target, and the men in the bows raised a sloping barricade of locked shields; but they were wooden shields. Tros' engine could have shot a flight of arrows through them as easily as an ordinary arrow goes through leather jerkins.

The Northman chief chose to lighten his boat. He growled an order and six men leaped into the water, leaving only twelve and three women. The six, along with those who had swum alongside all the way, turned back and made for the second boat, which was already overcrowded.

Leaning his weight against the table on which the arrow-engine turned, Tros let the leading boat approach within two ships' lengths before he tried conclusions.

"Who comes here to yield himself?" he shouted then in the Gaulish tongue, for he knew neither Norse nor any of the dialects of Northern Britain, which a Northman might possibly have understood.

That leading boat was at his mercy; it was a frail thing, nearly awash with the weight of men; but he could see those fair-haired women crouching among the men's legs, and though he would have taken oath before a pantheon of gods that his own heart was invulnerable—that whether a foe was male or female was all one to him—he held his finger on the trigger yet a while.

The Northmen seemed to hesitate. They let their boat turn sidewise, head upstream, exposing its whole flank to Tros. The chieftain in the midst uphove a great two-headed ax and gestured at the bireme's stern, shouting strange words in a voice that resembled waves echoing in caverns.

It appeared he was defying Tros to single combat, a disturbing possibility that Tros had overlooked. He was under no compulsion to accept a challenge, but he knew what the Britons—and their women in particular—would say of any man who should refuse one. It was part of the tactics of war so to fight as to provide an enemy no opportunity to issue such a challenge until the outcome of single combat could not affect the issue either way.

However, Tros was not sure he had understood yet; and there were no women in the third boat, which was laboring in midstream, losing headway against the tide. They were rowing with a pole and broken branches. He loosed the flight of arrows at it, plunking the whole dozen square amidships.

The wounded Britons yelled delight. The arrows pierced the shields and struck men down, who fell against the farther gunwale and upset the crowded boat. The others, jumping to save themselves, capsized it, and it drifted down-stream, bottom upward.

The second boat backed out of range, avoiding the men in the water because there was no room for them. It was nearly awash already without the added burden of strong hands on the gunwale and heavy men seeking to clamber overside; its crew of discouraged Northmen elected presently to drift down-stream, hoping perhaps to make connection with the crew of the other longship lower down.

So there was only one boat left to deal with for the moment, one boat, eleven men, and that great, grim Northman captain, with the women crouching at his knees. The Northman's eyes were on the longship; he was close enough for Tros to see them and to recognize despair, the mother of forlorn hope.

No ruler loves a kingdom as the true sea-captain loves a ship he built and navigated through the rock-staked seas. Tros knew that blue-eyed yearning; he could ever feel it in his own bones when he planned the queen of all ships he would some day build and sail into the unknown.



HE LAID another dozen arrows in the grooves and cranked the engine; but the Northman, who could see him plainly, stayed within range, flourishing his ax as if he courted death, bellowing his bull-mouthed phrases that to Tros conveyed less meaning than his gestures.

They were a challenge repeated again and again. There was no humility about that man; in his defeat he was as splendid as in victory, demanding a right that no brave man might keep from him. One of the wounded Britons called to Tros, interpreting his words:

"He bids you fight him for the longship! Beat him, says he, and he surrenders to you—he and his men and his women. If he beats you, he takes the longship and you must help him sail it home! But if each should kill the other, then his men- and women-folk are at Caswallon's mercy! Those are his terms. You must fight him, Tros!"

But it irked Tros to be told he must do anything. He could have shot that Northman down, and though the wounded Britons would have mocked him for a coward, he was strong-willed; he could face their scorn if he saw fit.

His eyes were on the farther riverbank, where now a hundred of Caswallon's men were working like beavers to build the raft, and he was calculating just how long they would require to finish it and to pole it across the river. He decided they would never be able to move such a clumsy platform fast enough through the water to overtake the Northmen, although if the bireme and the longship were attacked they might arrive in time to save both, and if they were successful they would claim the longship as their lawful plunder.

It was therefore up to him, Tros, to decide, and to do it swiftly.

He doubted Caswallon, remembered that Gaulish fishing-boat dismasted in the Channel storm, recalled to mind the likelihood that Cæsar's men had undermined him in Caswallon's favor by some ingenious means. Even if Tros should fight for the longship and defeat the Northman, Caswallon might claim as his own property all shipping captured in the Thames.

Cæsar's treasure-chest, left with Caswallon for safe keeping, would be a strong temptation to Caswallon's intimates, if not to the chief himself to force a quarrel, and the longship, if Tros should claim it for his own, might prove an excellent excuse. It was a sharp predicament.

But the Northman kept on challenging, and the wounded Britons urged. And suddenly a blue-eyed girl stood up beside the Northman, with fair hair falling in long plaits nearly to her knees.

She set one foot on the gunwale and mocked Tros in the Gaulish language, calling him a coward among other names. The words were ill-pronounced, but her voice throbbed with such scorn as Tros had never listened to—he who had heard harbor-women scold their lovers on the wharfs of Antioch and Alexandria!

The words—he knew their worth and could ignore them—might have left him careless, but the voice and her manner brought the hot blood to his cheeks. He had never seen a woman like her, had never before felt such strange emotions as her anger stirred in him. She looked not older than nineteen.

Tros threw his hand up in a gesture of command. Briton and Northman alike paused breathless at the signal.

"Tell me your name!" he demanded.

He had right to know that; a man did not engage in single combat with inferiors by birth.

"I am Olaf Sigurdsen of Malmoe."

"I am Tros, the son of Perseus Prince of Samothrace," Tros answered, laughing to himself.

His father would have been finely scandalized at the proceedings!

"I will fight you on your own terms. Come aboard."

They paddled the boat toward the bireme, but Tros bade them halt when they were half a dozen boat's length distant. He had heard that Northmen were colossal liars, although he had only heard that from their enemies, the Britons. He knew they were plunderers by profession; he doubted it was in them to keep faith if they should learn that only wounded men were on the bireme and that the longship lay defenseless. He summoned Conops, posted him at the loaded arrow-engine.

"Come aboard alone," he said then, speaking slowly, waiting for the blue-eyed girl to interpret to Olaf Sigurdsen.

He laid his right hand on the arrow-engine.

"You may put in to the riverbank. I ill count it treachery if more than one an steps ashore. Then climb on to this ireme over the bow, and let the boat put ut again into the river. You must fight me on my own poop, Olaf Sigurdsen."

"I will come, and yet, I have no proof of you," the Northman answered.

The blue-eyed girl translated that with such withering scorn that Tros winced. Olaf Sigurdsen sat down, perhaps to rest himself, but the girl stood, continuing to glare at Tros until the boat's bow touched the mud and she had to clutch the chieftain's head to keep her balance.

Conops turned the arrow-engine, following the boat, and went through ostentatious pantomime of taking aim; but Olaf Sigurdsen jumped ashore and they poled the boat out again into the stream, driving the pole into the mud presently to serve as an anchor against the tide.

Then Sigurdsen came up over the bow and, battle-ax on hip, stood, realizing how he had deceived himself. Tros' wounded Britons sprawled along the deck below the bulwark, most of them with hardly strength enough to grin at him, some almost in the grip of death, all bleeding through blood-stiffened bandages. He saw the shapes of dead men under the sail-cloth forward of the citadel and gave a great laugh, lifting his battle-ax high and shouting to his friends:

"Hah! They have had a taste of us! They must have met with Volstrum's ship down-river! Volstrum bit them to the marrow, all but two!"

The Norsemen cheered and all three women in the boat mocked Tros, the young girl thumping her breast and claiming him as her own slave, to fetch and carry for her and to feed swine.

"Don't slay him! Beat him to his knees!" she cried to Sigurdsen, and repeated it in Gaulish so that Tros might understand.

"You may come," said Tros, and drew well back along the poop, drawing his long sword, throwing off the Roman cloak and stepping close to the arrow-engine, so that Conops might unbuckle the breast-armor.

The wounded Britons cheered him when the armor fell on deck, for they despised a man who did not bare his naked breast to an assailant. Then, pulling off his shirt, Tros flexed his huge muscles so that the hairy skin moved in waves and the Britons cheered again, he keeping his eyes on Sigurdsen and speaking through the corner of his mouth to Conops:

"Now, no dog's work! Keep your knife to yourself! If you so much as lift a hand to help me I'll turn from the fighting to skewer you to the deck! You understand? Hands off!"



SIGURDSEN came slowly up the ladder to the poop, ready to jump backward if Tross hould spring at him before his feet were on the deck, but Tros gave him full law and a breathing spell, considering the iron links on the outside of the Northmen's leather jerkin, wondering whether the iron was soft or brittle.

The Northman wore no helmet; he had lost it in the fighting over-river. His reddish hair hung to his shoulders and his blood-shot eyes shone with a gleam of desperation under an untidy fringe; and he had brought no shield. He looked tired, but he was not wounded; the blood on his face was from a scratch caused by brambles as he fought his way out of the forest.

For a full minute he and Tros stood studying each other, Conops whispering advice that Tros ignored.

"The point, master! The point! Up, and under the chin! Remember, an ax is all blade. He can only swing with it, but he has a long reach. Keep close, where he can only use short chops, and use your point!"

At last the Northman growled like an angry bear and came on, his weight on the balls of his feet, which made him tower above Tros, holding his great ax forward in both hands.

Tros met him with the point, stock-motionless, not giving ground, until the Northman stepped back suddenly and with the speed of lightning swung at the sword to break it. Tros' wrist hardly moved, but the ax-blade missed the sword-blade by an inch and the point went in between two links of the Northman's mail.

The prick of that maddened him; he came on like a whirlwind, swinging the ax upward at Tros' jaw—missed, because Tros stepped back at last and, rising on both feet, aimed two-handed at the crown of Tros' head.

Tros sprang aside, expecting the ax would crash into the deck and leave the Northman at his mercy, but the blow was turned in middescent and swept at him as if his body

were a tree-trunk, slicing the skin at his waist—then the same blow back again, back-handed, quicker than a snake's strike, and Tros had to jump clear.

The Northman rushed him, crouched a little, with his knees bent, thrusting upward at the sword-blade, so that Tros' lunge only skinned his crown, beginning at the forehead; but that brought blood down into the Northman's eyes, half-blinding him, and he missed his next swing wildly.

He tried to shake the blood off, spared his left hand for a second, but that cost him a thrust through the arm and Conops yelled retorts in Greek to the women who screamed encouragement in Norse.

Tros had his man now, knew it, carried the fight to him, side-stepping the prodigious swings and thrusting, forever thrusting with short jabs at the Northman's right arm, circling cautiously around him with his knees bent and his legs spread well apart.

The air screamed with the ax-blows. Twice the Northman knocked the sword-blade upward, rushed in under it and tried to brain Tros with the up-thrust, using the ax-end like a club; and Tros had never fought an ax-man; he caught the first of those blows underneath his arm-pit and for a moment it deadened his whole left side.

But every time the Northman pressed a savage charge home it cost him blood from some part of his body. Ten times Tros could have killed him and refrained. He kept on thrusting at the right arm until the blood streamed down and the ax-hilt slipped in the Northman's fingers.

Then for two or three titanic minutes Sigurdsen swung with his left alone, using his right to try to grab Tros' sword-blade; but Tros opened the cut in his forehead again and the Northman jumped back to the poop-rail, trying to shake blood out of his eyes.

"Now kill him, master!" Conops shouted. "Up under the chin and finish him!"

But Tros stood back, breathing heavily, point forward and his sword-hand high.

"Now yield!" he said to Sigurdsen, ignoring the yells of the Northmen in the boat, that might have put him on his guard if he had paid attention to them.

He spared one swift glance for the Britons over-river; they were coming at last, a hundred of them crowded on a crazy raft, with horses swimming loose on either side of it and two men clinging to each horse's tail.

But that one glance was nearly one too many. In the fraction of a second that he spared for it the Northman stiffened, whirled his ax and hurled it with both hands straight at Tros' head. It cut his right cheek as he side-stepped to avoid it, crashed against the citadel and stuck in the woodwork, humming.

"And now, Olaf Sigurdsen, yield yourself; for you and your women and those other men are mine!" said Tros.

Sigurdsen bowed his head and held up his right hand. Conops shouted at the top of his lungs in Greek, and the wounded Britons cheered, raising themselves by the bulwark to taunt the Northmen in the boat. Sigurdsen offered his throat for Tros' sword, but Tros wiped his blade on Conops' shirt and rammed it home into the sheath.

"And the longship, too, is mine!" he said.

Sigurdsen nodded. He and Tros could understand each other when the conversation was of such essentials as ships.

Tros held out his right hand.

"Can you see it, Sigurdsen?" he asked.

The Northman shook the blood out of his eyes again, stared dumbly for a moment, came two or three steps forward as if doubting what he saw and stood rigid, waiting. He was dazed. It seemed he still expected to be killed.

Tros seized him in both arms, patting him on the back, and Conops cried, being a Greek, who had few emotions of his own but huge capacity for feeling what he supposed Tros felt. The Northman sobbed as if his lungs would burst, but whether that was grief or anger none might say; and there came a keening from the boat alongside, led by women's voices.

They had had to keep faith, whether or not they had intended it, because the raft was nearly in midstream and there was no longer the slightest hope of escape from the hurrying Britons.

Tros kicked the arrow-basket and upended it, let Sigurdsen to sit there, and ordered Conops to bring water and cleanse his wounds. Then he pulled on his shirt and leaned overside to speak to the girl who had mocked him.

She was silent, dry-eyed, standing in the boat—it was the other, older women and the men who wailed. Her eyes met Tros' defiantly, bewildering blue eyes like flakes of northern sky under her flaxen hair, eyes that made Tros feel unfamiliar emotions; they

emed able to rob him of the fruit of ctory.

"You may come up and tell me your name," he said gruffly.

"I am Helma, sister of Olaf Sigurdsen," she answered. But she made no motion to obey him; simply stood there with her hands clasped.



TROS vaulted the rail, descended midway down the wooden ladder that was spiked to the bireme's side and offered her his right hand. She refused it with an imperious chin-gesture that commanded him to climb and let her follow; so he laughed and led.

She was beside him almost before his own feet touched the deck. There their eyes met again and he smiled, but she turned her back, went to her brother's side to take the sponge from Conops and attend his wounds. She said not one word to Tros or to her brother or to any one.

CHAPTER IV

TROS MAKES PRISONERS AND FALLS IN NEED OF FRIENDS

THE raft drew near, and as the horses' feet found bottom they were harnessed to it to increase the speed. Caswallon, with Orwic beside him, stood in the raft's bow, wiping blood off the white skin over his ribs where a Northman's spear had entered an inch or two. He wore belted breeches, spear and shield, and a little peaked iron cap, but the blue designs painted on his skin made it look as if he wore a shirt, too, until he was a dozen yards away.

There was no news Tros could give him. Orwic had told about Volstrum's ship, sunk lower down the Thames. The Northmen whom Tros could claim as his own prisoners, men and women, had climbed aboard the bireme and were standing in the ship's waist looking miserable, all except Sigurdsen's wife, who was helping Helma tend his wounds.

The other woman was a widow; her man had been cut down by the Britons in the forest fighting and she was keening to the sky about her loss.

As many of the wounded Britons on the bireme as could stand up shouted to Caswallon and his men the news of Sigurdsen's surrender, including the terms of combat and the fact that the longship now belonged to Tros.

By the look on Orwic's face there was something in the wind beside the Northman business; he kept glancing at Caswallon and from him to Tros, who for his own part studied the prisoners and counted their weapons on the poop beside him. Conops, swearing Greek oaths, leaned against the arrow-engine, itching to loose its charge against the Britons on the raft if they should dare to invade the longship. He knew how much loot they would leave in it! They would burn it when every movable stick had been ripped away!

However, Caswallon came hand-over-hand up the bireme's ladder, followed by Orwic and six others; he ordered the men on the raft ashore to find some way of following the Norse fugitives down-stream. Half a dozen tried to disobey him, swarming up the bireme's side, but he jumped off the poop and beat them back with his spear-butt, the others laughing at them from the raft.

Then Caswallon looked the wounded over —a third of them were his blood-relations— and said a few words to each before he climbed the poop again and answered Tros' salute.

"So you have come home, Tros!"

He smiled, but he did not offer to embrace Tros as the British custom was. "Orwic tells me you are a great sea-captain."

His words were almost cordial; there only lacked a half-note and the old careless air of friendship to make him the same Caswallon who had seen the bireme on its way from Lunden ten days before—but that might be due to the fighting over-river and distress to see so many good men dead and maimed. Tros answered with his hands behind him:

"I bring my father's body, for which I must beg obsequies. I crave the favor that he may lie in British earth beside your own brave men. Caswallon, not a man is missing; dead or alive I have brought them all!"

Caswallon nodded, glancing to right and left.

"Are you well enough paid—with a longship and—how many prisoners?" he asked.

"I never asked payment," Tros answered. "Caswallon, what is wrong between us?"

Caswallon frowned, stroking his mustache and tossing the long hair back over

his shoulder. For a moment he studied the blue-eyed girl who was washing her brother's wounds; but she turned her back toward him, and he met Tros' eyes again.

"If what I hear of you is true, I will nevertheless remember former friendship, Tros. If it is not true, it is better not spoken in men's hearing. Let us talk alone."

Tros led the way down from the poop and into the cabin where his father's body lay. The smell in there was stifling; Caswallon snorted, but Tros threw the door wide and they stood together studying the old man's face.

"Like a Druid," Caswallon said at the end of a long silence.

"Greater than any Druid!" Tros answered gruffly.

"What are those marks on his wrists?" Caswallon asked.

"Cæsar tortured him!"

They faced each other in the light that poured through the open door.

"Is it true, or is it not true, Tros, that you have made a pact with Cæsar?"

"It is not true," Tros said frowning. "Who has come telling you that lie?"

"Skell! You spared Skell's life when you had the right to kill him. You sent him to Cæsar, as you told me to help you to trick Cæsar. But now Skell returns with a tale about secret intriguing."

Tros whistled.

"I turned Skell over to Cæsar's men at Caritia, thinking they would put him in the pest-house. Has Skell won Cæsar's confidence so soon?"

"He is home again, and in strange company," said Caswallon. "I have not seen him, but——"

Tros laid a hand on Caswallon's arm.

"I speak," he said, "in the presence of the dead. Believe me or Skell! Which shall it be?"

Caswallon turned his back and stood for a full minute in the doorway, stroking his chin, watching the wounded on the deck. Druids had arrived from somewhere; with their long skirts tucked into their girdles they were pouring liquid on to stiffened bandages, examining wounds, behaving workmanly, as if they knew their trade. Caswallon turned suddenly.

"Tros," he exclaimed, "I am beholden to you twice, and I would not take Skell's word for it that the sun is not the moon. Yet Orwic tells me you refused to fight the Northmen until you ran into them down-river and there was no room for you to run; he tells me that at Seine-mouth you spoke with Cæsar in Latin, which is a tongue we Britons don't understand."

"I called on Cæsar to surrender to me," Tros interrupted. "He had climbed over the bow when I sunk his boat and——"

"And Orwic tried to capture him, but you called Orwic off. Cæsar did not surrender, but you and he spoke, after which he escaped! And now comes Skell to Hythe, whence he sends me a letter by a woman's hand; and the woman says Cæsar has promised you my kingdom when I am dead, in return for your having spared his life. She had a letter for you from Cæsar, written in Latin, which I can not read. These Northmen raided Hythe before they came up-Thames. How is it you were so long following them up-river?"

"Storms! I was hove-to in the ocean. Moreover, I did not know of Northmen in the Thames. When I saw the smoke of villages——"

"My men say you refused to let them land and run to my aid!"

"Did I not sink a longship?" Tros asked indignantly.

"Yes, when there was no alternative! And now, when you might have shot these other Northmen down, you let one whole boat-load of them escape, and you accept their chief's surrender to yourself—their chief, three women and how many men? I find that strange."

"Will you listen to me?" Tros asked; and when Caswallon nodded he told his own story from the beginning, omitting no details, not even his own qualms and his thoughts of making for the Belgian coast.

"For I foresaw you might doubt me, and I knew Cæsar would be swift with some ingenious trick. Now it amounts to this, Caswallon: I am Cæsar's enemy, and your friend. But you and I are free men. You may end our friendship when it pleases you."

Caswallon hesitated, with his hands behind him. There was something on his mind still.

"I have told all. What are you keeping from me?" Tros asked him.

"You shall speak with Fflur," Caswallon answered.

Tros breathed relief. Whoever else was

ckle, he knew Fflur! Caswallon's wife was loyal to Caswallon, but no subtlety could undermine her judgment; she could see through men and their intrigues; she ruled her husband and his corner of Britain without his knowing it; and she was Tros' friend.

"In the meanwhile?" Tros asked.

"I do not forget you were my friend," Caswallon answered, "and though you have lost me sixty men on your adventure, you have saved me it may be a hundred in their place by sinking that Northman down-river. I am king here and the river rights are mine, but you may have that longship and your prisoners. That chest of Cæsar's gold you left with Fflur is yours, too. You may bury your father's corpse in British earth. Thereafter we will hear what Fflur says."



CASWALLON strode out on the deck and went to where the druids were tending wounds. Because he was the chief, a druid tried to insist on bandaging the spear-wound over his ribs, but Caswallon took the druid by the shoulders and shoved him back to the task he had left, standing then to watch the marvels of swift surgery the druids wrought.

They had a drug that caused unconsciousness; they opened one man's skull and inset bone from the skull of another who had been dead an hour or two;* one druid opened his own vein and surrendered a quart of blood for the veins of a man who had nearly bled to death. But they amputated no limbs; if a leg or an arm was beyond their skill to repair, they let the man die whole, as he had come into the world, easing his death with an anodyne.

Tros returned to the poop, where Sigurdsen sat glowering at the Britons, his wife wailing on the deck beside him, and the blue-eyed Helma standing, her back to the rail and her chin high, too proud to shed tears, too hopeless to speak even to her own kin.

She looked away over Tros' shoulder at the skyline, and Tros, who had seen well-bred women sold at auction in many a foreign port, turned over in his mind what he might say that should console her—possibly a little, if not much.

"Can your people ransom you?" he asked.

She met his eyes and answered with surprizing calm, her voice not trembling:

"No. These are all my people. There was war and the men of Helsing burned our villages. There was neither corn nor dried meat left, and the fishing is hard in winter, so we came to seize a holding here, my brother and Volstrum of Fiborg-by-Malmoe, with their two ships and all the men that remained. Most of the women and children had been carried off by the men of Helsing. None can ransom us unless Volstrum comes up-river, and if he comes——"

"He will not come," Tros assured her. "I have sunk his ship. If he is not drowned he will fall into the Britons' hands."

She betrayed no emotion at that news, but repeated it in Norse to her brother, who laid his head between his hands and groaned aloud.

"Will you sell her to me?" asked a Briton, one of the men who had been in the thick of the fighting across the river and had boarded the bireme with Caswallon. "I bid you two man-slaves and two horses for her."

"No," Tros answered, and the other Britons sneered at the man who made the bid.

They all had slaves. Buying and selling was lawful; they now and then sold criminals and captives to foreign ship-owners to replace sailors who had died of scurvy; but they did not approve of barter in human beings.

However, there was an atmosphere of enmity to Tros; some one had been spreading rumors. They held aloof from him, giving him two-thirds of the bireme's poop instead of crowding to ask questions or to boast of their own prowess against the northmen in the woods.

"What shall I do with you?" Tros asked, meeting the girl's sky-blue eyes.

He knew what he would do with Sigurdsen unless destiny should interfere; so Sigurdsen's wife was no problem, and the widow-woman, who was wailing in a corner below the poop, would dry her eyes before long and be chosen as some man's mate. But this fair-haired girl puzzled him.

"I said what I would do if Sigurdsen had beaten you!" she answered. "I would have put iron on your neck and you should have fetched and carried for me!"

"But I beat Sigurdsen," said Tros. "I am obliged to make provision for you. Shall I marry you to one of his men?"

She bared her teeth.

*Many of the skulls discovered in ancient British burying-places and on battle fields bear marks of having been trephined.

"Anything but that!" she answered scornfully. "They all ran from the men of Helsing! They ran! And their women and children became captives! Yonder in those woods they ran again, instead of dying where they stood!"

Suddenly her eyes laughed, as if she saw the ultimate of irony and took delight in it.

"I belong to you," she went on. "Are you also a coward?"

Tros stroked his black beard, squaring back his shoulders. Not so soon, if ever, would he link fate with a woman. His father had instilled into him at least that one conviction: Yielding to that lure, and freedom of earth and sea, were incompatible.

"I have yet to meet the woman who can conquer me!" he answered.

She glared as if she would like to stab him; but he saw something else in her eyes that he could not read, and he was aware of a prodigious impulse to befriend her.

If she only had used the usual feminine ways of ensnaring a man, he would have felt more at ease; but she did none of that. She turned away from him and knelt beside her brother, speaking to him earnestly in Norse, which Tros could not understand.

Sigurdsen stood up presently and looked straight at Tros. He was already in a fever from his wounds and his eyes burned desperately, although his face was sad and was made to look sadder by the long mustache that drooped below his chin. He spoke about a dozen words, Helma interpreting, kneeling, speaking very loud because her back was toward Tros.

"Put us all into the longship! Therein burn us! We will not seek to escape!"

Tros laughed at that.

"Not I!" he answered. "I need the longship and I need a crew. You and I might burn a fleet or two, Sigurdsen! Britons say Northmen are bold liars; Greeks have the name of being crafty ones, and Greek is my mother tongue, so how can you and I pledge faith?"

Helma interpreted, glancing once at Tros over her shoulder.

"I am Olaf Sigurdsen," the Northman answered, and closed his lips. But Helma added to that, standing at last and holding her chin high:

"If you were good Norse stock, instead of a barbarian with amber eyes, you would know what that means!"

"Tell him he must keep faith better than he fights, if he hopes to please me!" Tros answered; for he liked the look of Olaf Sigurdsen; he wanted to prod him and find what lay beneath the sorry mask.

The girl flared until her cheeks were crimson under the flaxen hair. Her breast heaved with passion; her hands grew white with pressure as she clenched her fingers; but she contrived to force a frozen note into her voice, speaking straight at Tros as if each word were a knife aimed at his throat:

"He was a spent man when he fought you, or you would be his slave this minute! He has slain his two-score Britons in the forest. You—you do not know courage! You do not know faith! How shall I tell you the worth of his promise? You, who never kept faith! Olaf Sigurdsen's fathers were kings when ice first closed in on the North and darkness fell at midday! I am a king's daughter! Shall he and I waste words on you?"

Tros liked her. He forbore to answer her in kind. And he had seen too often the results of promises exacted under force. Yet he needed friends; he needed them that minute.

"Is he homeless, and has been a king? I, too, am homeless and the son of a prince. It seems to me we have a common ground to meet on," he said, speaking very slowly that she might lose none of the significance. "When a man plights faith to me I hold him to it, but I repay him in kind.

"Say, to Sigurdsen, I give him choice. He may fight me again when he has rested, tomorrow, or the next day, or a month from now; and in that case I will kill him. Or he may ask my friendship and make promise to obey me as his captain; and in that case he shall find in honorable service no indignity. Or, if he wishes, I will give you all to Caswallon, who is a king, whereas I am not one. Let Sigurdsen speak his mind."



THE girl's reaction to that speech was vivid. She changed color, bit her lip, grew pale and red again, regarding Tros from another aspect altogether. She seemed to have grown nervous.

"A prince's son?" she said, and turned to her brother, speaking to him hurriedly in breathless sentences, clutching his sleeve, repeating short phrases again and again.

Her brother watched Tros' eyes, making no sign until she had finished. Then,

after a minute's pause, he said hardly a dozen words.

"Olaf Sigurdsen desires your friendship. He will obey you but none other!" the girl interpreted; then added, "he means by that——"

"I know what he means by that!" Tros interrupted, and turned to Conops, who was listening with unconcealed but mixed emotions. He pointed toward the Northman's ax, its blade buried deep in the woodwork of the citadel.

"Bring it and return it to him!"

Conops never disobeyed; but he obeyed that order like a dog sent to the kennel, taking his time about wrenching the ax free, and longer still about returning with it. Tros snatched it from his hand impatiently and offered it hilt-first to Sigurdsen:

"Now let me hear your promise as a free man with a weapon in your hand!" he said deliberately. "Speak it without guile, as in the presence of your fathers' gods! For by the gods of earth and heaven I need friends!" he added to himself.

But Conops swore Greek oaths below his breath, and glared at Sigurdsen as a dog glares at a new, prospective kennel-mate.

CHAPTER V

A MAN NAMED SKELL RETURNS FROM GAUL

CASWALLON returned to the forest battlefield to count Norse prisoners and to look after wounded Britons, without speaking again to Tros. Even Orwic only waved a noncommittal farewell, and Tros was left alone with two ships, fifteen prisoners, and only Conops to help him manage them. The twenty hired seamen had returned from over river, but they were certain to be enemies, not friends.

The seamen demanded weapons, intimating that the prisoners might make a break for liberty; but their own only reason for staying was that Tros had not paid them, and he more than suspected they would try to pay themselves if provided with more than their own short, seamen's knives.

Even unarmed they were deadly unreliable; Caswallon's men who had gone down the riverbank in pursuit of the one boatload of Northmen that escaped Tros' arrow-fire would be sure to pass news along, so it would be only a matter of time before scores of longshore pirates would come hurrying in hope of loot.

Tros' hirelings would help them strip away everything portable, after which they would probably burn both ships in a wanton passion of destruction.

Meanwhile, tide was flowing; both ships lay fast on the mud, no hope of moving either of them until long after dark. The druids carried wounded and dead ashore; chariots arrived, as by a miracle, from nowhere and galloped away with their burden around a clump of trees and over the skyline.

There was no road in that direction, therefore, no prospect of assistance; the tracks the wheels cut in the turf were new, nearly at right angles to the riverbank, and not even approximately parallel to the direction from which the chariots had arrived.

To reach Lunden would take several hours of drifting, and the distance very likely was too great for one tide, which would have to rise to three-quarters of its flow before it could lift the ships; and even so, the bireme would have to be pumped out.

So Tros took a course few men would have dared to take; he returned their weapons to his prisoners, and brought them all up on the bireme's poop, where they could have overwhelmed him easily. He could not understand their speech, nor they his; there was only Helma to act interpreter, and her smile proved that she understood Tros' predicament. Her words confirmed it—

"I have pledged no friendship!"

"Have I asked it?" Tros demanded, staring at her.

He felt inclined to box her ears, hardly knew why he refrained.

Her eyes challenged his, but Tros seized the upper hand of her abruptly:

"Make me a bandage for this cut on my cheek!"

"There is Zorn's wife!"

"I commanded you."

He pointed to a box of loosely woven linen stuff that the druids had left on the deck.

"Very well."

She smiled in a way that implied a threat, which Tros perfectly understood; he had heard that the Norse women were adept with poison.

"Tell a seaman to carry it here," she added; and for the space of ten more seconds she defied him.

"You fetch it!"

Tros' amber eyes met hers more steadily than any man's had done and there was that behind them that Fflur, Caswallon's wife had called the "ancient wisdom," although Tros was only conscious of it as determination; he knew he must master this woman or lose control of all his prisoners. Far more than Sigurdsen, her brother, she was the pivot of opinion, although her brother doubtless thought he ruled the clan.

Suddenly she made him a mock curtsey and went down on deck to bring the bandages, carrying the box back on her head as if she were a bond-woman, avoiding the eyes of her own folk, artfully obliging them to see that Tros was making her a menial.

But Tros sat down on the up-turned arrow-basket and submitted his face to be bandaged as if he had noticed nothing, pulling off the heavy gold band that encircled his forehead and tossing it from hand to hand while she opened his wound with her fingers and sponged it. She understood him.

That gold band, though it might hang too loosely on her neck if he should place it there, would be a mark of servitude forever. There were letters and symbols graven on it, and although she could not read them she had no doubt they were his name and title.

She could not make a bandage stay in place without wrapping folds of linen under his jaw and around his forehead, so he could not replace the band when she had finished. He gave it to her to hold for him and three of the Northmen made comments that brought blushes to her cheek. She answered savagely, tongue-lashing them to silence. Tros turned his back to her and roared to the hired seamen to man the water-hoist.

Mutiny—instant and unequivocal! Maybe the bandage and the absence of the gold band made him look less like a king. The coolness toward him of Caswallon's men had had effect, too; and none knew better than those hirelings that longshore pirates would arrive ere long.

Why labor at the hoist when they would need their strength for looting presently, and for carrying away the loot to villages up-river? The tousle-headed, ragged, skin-clad gang defied him noisily, and Conops hurled a wooden belaying pin at the head of the nearest.



BUT the pin was hardly more abrupt than Tros. He left the poop, cloak flying in the wind, like a great birds wooping down on them, seizing the heads of two and beating them against a third, discarding those—they lay unconscious on the deck—hurling a fourth man broadside into half a dozen of his friends, and pouncing on the ringleader, who had been captain of a vessel of his own until Tros hired him. Tros twisted an arm behind his back until he yelled, then rubbed his nose along the beam of the waterhoist, leaving a smear of blood the length of it.

"Man that beam or eat it!" he commanded. "I will chop and stuff it down your throats if there's a drop of water in the bilge at sunset, or one backword from one of you meanwhile!"

So they went to work and Tros rolled the three unconscious men toward the trough until the outpour drenched their heads and they recovered, when he cuffed and shoved them toward the beam and they began to labor at it, too dazed to know what they were doing. Then, returning to the poop, he grinned at Sigurdsen, not glancing at Helma but signing to her to come near and interpret.

"Did you build your longship, Sigurdsen?"

The Northman nodded. He was sunk deep in a northern gloom and too dispirited to use his voice.

"Who did the labor? These?"

Sigurdsen nodded again, but a trace of pride betrayed itself as he glanced at his fellow-prisoners.

"I—I taught them all!" he grunted.

"Good! Then bid them calk this bireme from the inside as the water leaves the hold; use linen, clothing, frayed rope, anything, so be she floats to Lunden, where we'll beach her on the mud."

"Your ship is no good," Sigurdsen said gloomily.

"Hah! But her beak sunk Volstrum!" Tros retorted. "She has some virtues. We will pick her as the crows pick a horse's ribs, and you and I will build a ship together that shall out-sail all of them!"

Sigurdsen stared—hardly believed his ears—grinned at last, coming out of his gloom to order his men to work, with the three women to help them unravel rope to stuff into the leaking seams. But Tros

bade Helma stay there on the poop; and when Conops had found rope and cloth enough, and the hammering began below deck, he stood in front of her, folding his arms on his breast.

She supposed he intended to use her again as interpreter between himself and Sigurdsen and made ready to accept that duty willingly enough; it made her feel indispensable and the earlier look of ironic challenge returned into her eyes. But Tros surprized her.

"Can you cook?" he demanded.

She nodded, stung, indignant.

"Then do it! These Britons have rotted my belly with cindered deer-meat until poison would taste like golden oranges from Joppa! Go! The cook-house is in the citadel. I hunger. Cook enough for sixteen people."

Her eyelids trembled, brimming with indignant tears, but she bit her lip and not a tear fell. She held out Tros' gold forehead-band.

"Keep it," he said, "for your wages."

That chance thrust brought tears at last; she choked a sob. Tros knew then he had conquered her, although her friendship might be yet to win, and deadlier than her anger!

"I don't work for wages!" she blurted.

There was more passion in her voice than when she had screamed to Sigurdsen while the fight waged on the poop. She could endure to be a prisoner, to fetch and carry for her brother's conqueror; but as one whose "fathers were kings when ice first closed in on the North and it was dark at noonday" death looked better than earned money.

"Keep it as my gift then," Tros retorted with an air of huge indifference.

"No!"

She thrust the thing toward him and, since he would not take it, flung it at his feet, then, sobbing, hurried down the ladder and disappeared into the citadel, whence smoke presently emerged.

Tros did not want to talk to Sigurdsen; he wanted to think. It suited him best to have no interpreter at hand. Sigurdsen, whose wounds were painful, soused his bandages with water and lay down in a corner of the poop, his eyes alight with fever.

Tros leaned against the rail, facing the river bank, whence longshore plunderers might come, yet thinking less of them than of the blue-eyed, fair-haired Helma. She annoyed him. He was vaguely restless at the thought of having to provide for her. Some spark of tyranny within him, not yet gritted out against the rocks of destiny, stirred him toward cruelty, and it was blended with an instinct to defend himself against all women's wiles.

The custom of the whole known world, as regarded prisoners, was even more rigid and compulsory than written law. He, Tros, was answerable for the fate of fifteen people; they were his property, to do with as he pleased, dependent on him, obliged to be obedient on penalty of death, their only remaining right, that of looking to him for protection.

He might set them free, but if he did so Caswallon, should he see fit, could punish him for succoring and aiding public enemies. If he should keep them in Lunden, it would probably be months before the Britons would begin to treat them civilly; they would be in danger of mob-violence.

Yet, if he should imprison them their usefulness would vanish; they would cease to feel beholden to himself and would either seek to escape or else intrigue against him with any personal enemy who might evolve out of the political tangle.

Britain was full of rival factions; hundreds of Northmen had found shelter and prosperity in Britain by lending themselves to one faction or another, and these new prisoners might find friends easily enough.

The probability was that Caswallon had met with political trouble during Tros' absence; some aspirant for power very likely had accused him of assisting Tros with provisions and men at a time when the tribe could ill afford it.

If Caswallon's power were in jeopardy the chief would be a fool not to consider his own interests and might even feel compelled to show him enmity. Skell, who was of Norse extraction and a natural born treason-monger, might easily enough have stirred such disaffection as would shake Caswallon's chieftainship.

The long and the short of all that was, Tros needed friends, and the only available possible friends in sight were his Northmen prisoners, whose gratitude he proposed to earn and keep. Not that he placed much faith in gratitude—at any rate, not too much.

Homeless men, beaten in battle and reduced to the status of serfs, can hardly be blamed for disloyalty if offered opportunity to regain independence.

"Tros began to wonder just to what extent he himself was morally beholden to Caswallon. He even meditated taking the longship, which, having the lighter draught, would be first off the mud, and sailing down-Thames with his Northmen to seek safety on the Belgian coast. His only reason for dismissing the idea was his obligation to bury his father with proper obsequies.

He was particularly thoughtful about the young girl Helma. Instinct told him to beware of her, to give her no chance to ensnare him, to treat her with less than courtesy; intuition—which is as different from instinct as black from white—warned him that she was a friend worth winning, but that nothing could be won by a display of weakness.

Tros was no horseman, but he had picked up British terms from Orwic.

"She's a finely bred mare that must be broke before she'll handle," he reflected, grinning slyly at the smoke emerging through the cook-house window, grinning again as he thought of his lack of experience with women.

He wondered to whom he should marry her, the only ultimate solution that occurred to him.



AND while he thought of that, a boat came up the river, paddled furiously by eight men, keeping to the far bank to avoid the flowing tide, but crossing on a long slant presently and making straight for the two ships. A man sat in the stern whose features seemed vaguely familiar—a man in a fever of haste, who shifted restlessly and scolded at the straining crew.

"Skell!" Tros muttered. "Impudence—infinity—the two are one!"

He started for the arrow-engine, but thought better of it; he could deal with Skell single-handed, and there was Conops to help; the boat's crew were longshore Britons, of the type that might murder unarmed men, but would scamper away at the first threat of serious fighting, men of the sort that had been serfs for generations.

Skell came hand over hand uninvited up the ladder on the bireme's stern, and stood still on the poop with his back to the rail, surveying the scene, his foxy eyes avoiding Tros and his restless hands keeping ostentatiously clear of the sword and dagger he wore.

His fox-red beard was newly trimmed, and he wore good Gaulish clothes under a smock of dressed brown-stained deer-hide that came to his knees. He would have looked too well dressed if it had not been for the stains of travel.

"Tros, he said, meeting his eyes suddenly, "you and I should cease enmity. I did you a little harm, and you had revenge. Cæsar can employ us both, and I have word for you from Cæsar."

"Speak it," Tros answered.

He despised Skell, but he was not fool enough to shut his ears to news.

Skell might be Cæsar's man in theory, but a child could tell by his expression that it was Skell's advantage he was seeking first and last. He paused, picking words, and Tros had time to wonder how far such a reader of men's minds as Cæsar actually trusted him.

"I heard of these Northmen. They attacked Hythe," Skell said presently, "and I came overland to the Thames in hope of getting word with them, for I heard they were making for Lunden. I would have persuaded them to cross to Gaul with me and talk with Cæsar. Cæsar could have used such allies as these."

Tros nodded. Cæsar would ally himself with any one to turn an adversary's flank, and would reduce the ally to subjection afterward. But had Cæsar had time to say so much to Skell? Tros thought not; It was likelier that Skell was speculating on his own account.

"I met Britons down-river who told me you had sunk Volstrum's ship and captured this one," Skell went on, glancing repeatedly at the Northman who lay ten feet away from him clutching with fevered fingers at the haft of his great ax. "And I happen to know, Tros, that Caswallon has been turned against you by a new intrigue. Believe me, I know that surely."

"Aye," Tros answered, "none should know better than the man who managed the intrigue!"

Skell laughed; it began like a fox-bark but ended in a cackle like an old hen's; there was no more mirth in it than comes of greed and insincerity. But there was a note, that had nothing to do with mirth,

which set Tros studying the fear in Skell's eyes.

"That is true, Tros!" Skell went on. "I sent a message to Caswallon. I brought a woman from Gaul with me, one of Cæsar's light o' loves. She will make all Britain too hot to hold you! But Cæsar thinks, and I think, you are a man of sense. Cæsar bade me win you over to his side, if I can. The Britons have turned against you, Tros."

Tros grinned. He grinned like an oger. Mirth oozed from him.

"Hah! Go and tell your new master, Skell, that I have his bireme and his gold; I gave him a cold swim at Seine-mouth, sunk his boats, drowned his men and wrecked his fleet! Say that is all preliminary! Tell him I'm minded to make friends with him at about the time of the Greek Calends! Cæsar will know what that means, he talks Greek very well."

"Would you care to trust me?" Skell asked.

"No," said Tros.

"Because," Skell continued, as if he had not noticed the refusal, "for my part I would rather trust you than Cæsar or the Britons. I have lived my life in Britain, but my father was Norse and I feel among these Britons like a fish on land. As for Cæsar——"

"He is another alien, like me!" said Tros. "He and you were not bred under the same stars. Nor was I!"

"Cæsar is playing Cæsar's hand," Skell answered. "He would use you and me, and then forget us."

"He shall never forget me!" Tros remarked with conviction, grinning again hugely.

"I see you like Cæsar no more than I do," Skell began again; but Tros' laugh interrupted him.

"Like Cæsar? I admire him more than all the kings I ever met! He is the greatest of Romans. Compared to him, Skell, you are a rat that gnaws holes in a rotten ship! Cæsar is a scoundrel on a grand scale—a gentleman who measures continents, a gold-and-scarlet liar whom you can't understand, you, who would tell lies just because your belly ached!"

Skell looked a mite bewildered, but Tros' grin was good natured, so he tried again:

"Let bygones be, Tros! I am no such fool as to believe in Cæsar's friendship; I would sooner trust you, though you call me liar to my face. Why not pretend with me to be Cæsar's catspaws, and snatch out a nice fortune for ourselves?"

Tros stroked his beard reflectively. It formed no part of his philosophy to refuse to make use of a rascal, provided he could keep his own hands clean. Skell was a mere pawn in fortune's game, not like Cæsar, who used fortune for his mistress and debauched her with cynical assurance. There was nothing to be gained by trusting Skell, but not much sense in incurring his spite; better to kill him and have done with it than to cultivate his enmity, and Tros preferred never to kill if he could help it.

"You are afraid to go to Lunden?" he suggested, by way of plumbing Skell's thoughts.



SKELL was about to answer when the door of the cook-house opened and the blue-eyed Helma came carrying a wooden dish of wheat and meat, her eyes fixed on it for fear of spilling. Skell whistled softly to himself.

"That girl is no serving wench!" he remarked, eying the amber shoulder-ornaments and the gold wire on her girdle.

He seemed amused, and before Tros could prevent him he was speaking to her in the Norse tongue, she standing still because she could not carry the dish and look upward at the poop. What he said did not please her; Tros noticed that.

Skell jumped down from the poop and took the dish from her, holding it while she climbed the ladder and then reaching up to set it on the poop edge; she had lifted it again in both hands and was facing Tros before Skell could climb up behind her.

She appeared to be trying to shame Tros by her meekness, she a sea-king's daughter and he making her cook and fetch and carry! But Tros curtly bade her set the dish down, sniffing, for he could smell the stuff was burned.

"What did Skell say?" he demanded, glaring at Skell across her shoulder, silently daring him to interrupt.

"Does it matter what he says?" she retorted. "He is neither fish nor bird, a Briton who talks Norse!"

"Tell me!" Tros insisted.

She turned and looked at Skell, and it appeared that her contempt for him offset her indignation at Tros' bruskness.

"He said I should look to him for friendship."

"So!" said Tros. "Sit down then, Skell, and eat with us. I would like to hear more about friendship. Ho there, Conops! Come and eat, and bring the Northmen. Bid those Britons lay off pumping for an hour, unless the water makes too fast. Give them bread and dry meat."

The giant Sigurdsen refused food, although Helma tried to tempt him, but the other Northmen came and sprawled on deck, crowding the women away from the dish. Tros sent Conops for another plate and heaped food on it for Sigurdsen's wife and the widow, but he made Helma sit beside him, whereat Skell laughed.

"She will not eat with the men," he explained.

"She will obey!" Tros retorted, and then listened curiously while the Northmen sang a grace of some kind, a melancholy chant that had the dirge of seas in it and something of the roll of thunder.

When they had done he added a sunlit, wine-suggestive verse in Greek, being ever respectful of other men's religions.

For a while they ate enormously, using their fingers, Tros stuffing food into Helma's mouth until she laughed and had to yield, with her face all smeared with gravy. But the laughter brought tears to her eyes, and she only kept on eating because Tros insisted; shame at being made to eat with men was swallowed by a greater grief, and Tros began to pity her in his own bull-hearted way.

"Your brother Sigurdsen has made choice and cast in his lot with me. These other Northmen have no choice, but are my men henceforth. Now you shall choose," he told her. "There is Skell, and here am I. Whose fortune will you follow? I will give you to Skell if you wish.

Her scorn for Skell was so intense she almost spat at him.

"That half-breed!" she sneered. "You may bestow me where you will, Tros, for that is your right. But I will not die, I will live to see you writhe in ruin if you treat me as less than a king's daughter! I have heard you are a prince's son, so I submit to you, although I hate you. If I should have to bear your children, they shall be a shame to me but a pride to you."

Tros laid his huge hand on her shoulder.

"Peace!" he ordered.

Talk of that kind was as foreign to him as the Northmen's language that contained no word he understood. He was more perplexed about the girl than ever, utterly unable to imagine what to do with her. Abruptly, gruffly, he changed the subject.

"Tell us this plan of yours, Skell. How would she and you make use of me? What is your friendship worth to her?"

Skell tried to grin ingratiatingly. Since he had eaten Tros' food he had no fear of violence; the laws of hospitality were rigid; it was greater sin to break them than to steal or to seduce a neighbor's wife, and unless Tros were willing to incur contempt of the meanest slave in Britain he would have to let Skell get clear away before resuming enmity.

"Cæsar might love her!" Skell answered slyly. "Cæsar likes them young and well-bred. Why not send her to Cæsar to love him a while and make your peace with him?"

"Who is Cæsar?" asked Helma, cheeks reddening.

"He will be emperor of all the world, unless I succeed against him better than the last two times!" Tros answered. "Cæsar and I are as fire and water, but as to which is which you must judge for yourself! I hate him as you hate me, young woman. Do you understand that?"

She actually laughed. Her whole face lighted with a new humor that transformed it.

"Cæsar might like you if you would let him," she answered, and then looked away.

"What else?" asked Tros, staring straight at Skell.

"Did I not speak of one of Cæsar's light o' loves?" Skell answered. "The woman crossed from Gaul with me, in a boat that lost its mast almost within hail of your bireme. Take my advice and be rid of this one before that one casts her hook into your heart! Put this one to a wise use!"

"The woman's name?" asked Tros.

"She was named Cartisfindda, but the Romans changed it to Cornelia. She carried Cæsar's message to Glendwyr the Briton. Glendwyr plots against Caswallon, is ready to pounce at the first chance. You understand now? Cæsar can use you or ruin you! You and I and a handful of Northmen to help Glendwyr—man! We can help ourselves to the loot of Lunden Town! For a beginning I say, send this girl to Cæsar with your compliments."

Tros looked hard at Helma. There was laughter in his eyes, but Skell could not see that because he sat at Tros' right hand.

"Will you go?" he asked her.

"As your enemy?" she answered. "Yes!"

"Nay, I have enemies enough in Cæsar's camp!" said Tros. "Did you hear her, Skell? You must think of another means of making use of me!"

But it had occurred to him he might make use of Skell. "Are you afraid to come to Lunden?"

Skell looked frightened. For a moment he seemed to fear Tros might take him against his will, until he remembered that the ships were on the mud and he was Tros' guest, safe from violence.

"I am a stranger to all fear," he answered.

And he could look the part; he would have deceived a man who did not know him.



BUT the truth was, Skell was so full of fear that he could be trusted to change his plan at any moment and never to tell the truth where he had opportunity to weave a lie. His was the dread that makes misers and all meanness. He felt himself a toad beneath the harrow of misfortune, who could never afford to keep faith because of the initial handicap with which he started out in life.

He could recognize honesty—none more readily than he!—but only to try to take advantage of it; none less than he could cope with subtlety that uses truth for bait and candid explanations for a trap. But subtlety of that sort was Tros' instinctive weapon.

"Skell," he said, "you are a scoundrel who would slit your friend's throat for a woman's favor. I am not your friend; I have but one throat and I need it! I hope you are Cæsar's friend; yet I would hate to see a man like Cæsar brought to his end by a —— like you! However, that is Cæsar's problem and not mine."

Skell tried to look offended, but in his heart he felt flattered, as the smile in his eyes betrayed. Tros noticed that and continued the same vein of frankness:

"My difficulty, Skell, is this: That I have fed you. Therefore, you are my guest, and though I know you would never hesitate to kill me, if you could do it without danger, I dare not offend the gods by killing you. Therefore, I must make terms with you. But a bargain has two sides. I am minded you shall come to Lunden."

"Why?" demanded Skell.

"Because I like to have my enemies where I can see them!"

"And if I will not come?"

"You are afraid to come. You fear Caswallon. You know Caswallon knows you have intrigued with Cæsar. Yet you would like to go to Lunden because your house is there, and there are men who owe you money, whom you would like to press for payment.

"However, it may be that lure is not strong enough, so I will add this: Am I a man of my word, Skell? Yes? You are sure of that? Then listen: if you refuse to come to Lunden I will spend, if I must, as much as half of Cæsar's money that became mine when I took this bireme, I will spend it in cooking your goose for you!

"I will set Caswallon by the ears about you. And if all else fails me, I will seek you out and slay you with my own sword, much though it would irk me to defile good steel in such a coward's heart! Do you believe me?"

"And if I come to Lunden?" Skell inquired.

He was smiling. He enjoyed to talk of the issues of life and death when there was no presently impending danger.

"Then I will concede this: I will not move hand or tongue against you while you do the same by me. I will tell Caswallon you are a harmless rogue whose bark is far worse than his bite, for, as the gods are all around us, Skell, that is my honest judgment of you!

"I will tell Caswallon you have done us all a service, for that is true: Unless you had gone to Gaul in hope of betraying me to Cæsar, I could never have annoyed the Roman there at Seine-mouth.

"Skell, I almost captured him! So I will beg Caswallon to ignore your treachery; and if he should refuse, I will protect you with my own guest-privilege."

Skell meditated that a while. His foxy, iron eyes kept shifting from face to face, avoiding Tros but constantly returning to study Helma, who was kneeling beside Sigurdsen, aiding his distracted wife to soak the stiffening bandages.

"I mistrust your words," Skell said at last. "You are a man who keeps a bargain, but you bind one craftily and I suspect a

trick. You must swear to me that there is nothing hidden in these terms of yours."

"Not I!" Tros answered. "I expect to make my profit. So do you, Skell. I will change no word of the agreement. Either you come to Lunden, subject to my stipulation, or you go your own way and I will rid the earth of you as swiftly as that first duty can be done! Now choose—for I hear oars—and the tide is turning."

Skell also heard oars, thumping steadily down-stream toward the bireme.

"I agree!" he said, snapping his mouth shut, looking bold and almost carefree; but Tros' amber eyes discerned the nervousness that underlay that mask.

Conops whispered in Tros' ear. Tros stood and glanced over the stern.

"Druids!" he said, and began straightening his garments to receive them with proper dignity. "They will be coming for my father's body. Heh! But Caswallon is a true host, friendship or no friendship! See in what state the druids come!"

CHAPTER VI

"A PRETTY DECENT SORT OF GOD!"

THE druids sang as they approached the bireme. In the bow of a long barge, under a bower of yew-branches, there stood an ancient of days, bald-headed, a white beard flowing to his waist, a golden sickle in his girdle, his white robe touching sandals laced with golden thongs.

He led the chant; young voices in the stern caroled joyful, almost bird-like regular responses; fourteen rowers droned a harmonied accompaniment, pulsing to the rythm of the gilded oars. Serenely, solemnly they hymned the ever-nearness of eternity; there was not one note of grief.

The barge was draped in purple cloth and the rowers wore sleeveless purple tunics over their white smocks. They who stood singing in the stern were robed, like the ancient in the bow, in white from head to foot; and all rowers included, wore wreaths of mistletoe.

In the midst of the barge, between the rowers, was a platform draped in white with a wide gold border, and over that a purple canopy was raised on gilded rods. The sides of the barge were white, adorned with gilded scroll-work.

The rowers tossed oars and the barge swung to a standstill under the bireme's stern; but the chant continued. Tros and his prisoners stood respectfully, Olaf Sigurdsen supporting himself on the shoulders of two men; the Northmen's lips moved as if they were trying to fit their own familiar words to druid music, that stirred their pagan hearts as only battle, and the North Sea storms and elemental mysteries could ever do.

Skell kept covering his face nervously; some half-familiar phantom had returned to haunt his brain. The women, except Helma sobbed as if the sobbing brought relief to tortured heart-strings; but she stood still, beside Tros, brave-eyed, almost glistening with emotions that not she herself could have explained.

Her shoulder touched Tros' arm and he could feel a thrill that made his flesh creep pleasantly. He drew his arm away.

The hireling Britons at the water-hoist ceased work and stood by the bulwark. Conops, irreverent and practical, threw a rope over the stern, but the druids ignored it; they held the barge to the bireme with gilded boat-hooks while two of the rowers drove long poles into the river-bed to serve for an anchor at either end.

Then they raised a wooden ladder with bronze hooks that caught the bireme's stern rail, and up that the old High-Druid came, pausing at every step to roll out his majestic hymn and wait for the response. He came over the taffrail, singing, moving his right hand in centuries-old ritual, as calmly as if that were a temple threshold. He hardly touched Tros' proffered arm as he stepped down to the poop.

There, eyes on the horizon, he stood booming his hymn to eternity until eight druids followed him over the stern. He needed no advice from Tros; Caswallon must have told him where the greater-than-a-druid's body was that he had come to bear away with ancient honors.

He strode forward, and down the short ladder to the deck, the other druids keeping step behind him; and when Tros, summoning all his dignity, swung himself down to the deck to open the cabin door and show the way, a druid motioned him aside. They let no uninitiated hand have part, let no untaught eye see the rites they entered to fulfil, let none but druids hear their whispered liturgy.

Two druids stood outside the door, their backs to it, lips moving, signifying with a

nod to Tros that he should keep his distance.

So Tros stood, leaning on his drawn sword, his head bowed, until they came forth at last bearing the body between them. It was no longer covered with Cæsar's scarlet cloak, but robed in druid's garments under a purple sheet and laid on a gilded stretcher.

The old High-Druid swayed ahead of the procession, chanting. They ascended the poop-ladder, hardly pausing, skilfully passing the stretcher from hand to hand so that the body they honored was always feet first, always horizontal, paused on the poop to chant a changed refrain, then descended the ladder to the barge, with the rear end of the stretcher hung in slings, and no commotion or mismovement to disturb the dead man's dignity.

The chanting rose to higher melody, as if they welcomed a warrior home, when they laid the body on the platform in the barge's midst. Then the old High-Druid took his stand beneath the canopy; the rowers cast off from the anchor-poles; the barge moved out into the stream, and to a new chant, wilder and more wonderful, the oarsmen swung in unison, until they vanished in a crimson glow of sunset between autumn-tinted oaks, up river.

Then, Tros broke silence.

"Thus, not otherwise, a soul goes forth," he said. "None knoweth whither. They bear it forth; and there are they who shall receive it."

He spoke Greek; only Conops could have understood the words, and Conops' senses were all occupied in watching Skell and Helma, trying to guess what mischief they were brewing. Quietly he plucked Tros' sleeve, whispering:

"Master; better give me leave to kill that sly-eyed fox! Coax him forward of the cook-house. Slip the knife in back of his ear! As for the woman——"

He did not offer to kill the woman; he was thrifty; he knew her value.

"—— whip her! Whip her now, before she thinks you easy and does you a damage! Take my advice, master, or she will cook a mischief for you quicker than she burned the stew!"

The sun went down; and in a haze of purple twilight Tros drew Helma to the starboard rail, backing her against it.

"What did Skell say this time?" he demanded.

Conops was listening, hand on knife-hilt, watching Skell, who leaned over the far rail whistling to himself. The hireling seamen having pumped the bireme dry had gone to the bow, where they were half-invisible, like fantoms herded in the gloom. The tide was rising fast; the broken oars between the ships already creaked to the longship's motion, but the bireme was still hard and fast.

Helma laughed mirthlessly, but she seemed to have recovered something of her former spirit.

"You are arrogant, and I obey you, Tros, but I don't know for how long! Skell says you are among enemies in Britain. He says they will not let you keep your prisoners or the longship. He bade me notice how the druids said no word to you.

Tros laughed. He knew the druids took no part in personal disputes, not interfering much in politics. The same law governed all their ceremony; nothing was allowed to interrupt it.

"Go on," he said. "What was Skell's proposal?"

"Skell said, if I go with you I shall be sold in open market by Caswallon's order."

Tros knew that Skell knew better. Even should Caswallon claim the prisoners despite his recent gift of them to Tros, he could not dispose of them like cattle without incurring the wrath of the druids and the scorn of a whole countryside. But it was a likely enough lie for Skell to tell to a prisoner, who might not know the British customs, though she could speak the tongue.

"So what did Skell suggest?"

"He said the Britons will come and loot these ships. They will kill the men and seize us women. Skell said, if I obey him, he will protect me and take me to Gaul."

Tros whistled softly, nodding to himself. There was no hurry; the longship floated; he could move her whenever he chose. Meanwhile, Skell had broken the guest-law and he had excuse to kill him or to kick him overboard. Conops read his gesture, took a step toward Skell, drawing his knife eight gleaming inches from the sheath.

"Stay!"



TROS seized him by the shoulder. It was a dangerous game to deal roughly with a guest in Briton. Skell had eaten from Tros' dish by invitation, all the crew had seen it. A prisoner's word that Skell had

voided privilege could carry no weight against a free man's unless given under torture.

"What answer did you make to Skell?" he demanded, turning, but keeping hold of Conop's shoulder.

The girl laughed, mirthlessly again. "I would liefer die beside my brother than go, a half-breed's property, to Cæsar."

"Come here, Skell!" Tros commanded.

But he spoke too suddenly, too fiercely. There was a splash as Skell sprang overside. Then Tros' ears caught what Skell probably had heard first—song and splashing in the distance, down stream. He thought of the arrow-engine but refrained and pushed Conops away from it. Conops urged, but Tros knew his own mind.

"Let the rat run! I have a notion not to kill him."

"Notion!" Conops muttered. "I've a notion too! We'll all be gutted by pirates, that's my notion!"

Skell's boat left the bireme's side in response to his shouts and the Britons who had brought him hauled him out of water. Straight away he set them paddling toward the farther bank, where he could lurk in shadow out of sight of the approaching boats, whose crews sang drunkenly and splashed enough for a considerable fleet. But there was no moon, no stars, only the ghostly British gloaming deeply shadowed, and Tros could not see them yet.

"Into the longship!" he commanded. "All hands!"

The hirelings in the bow demurred. They knew the time was come for looting. Tros charged them, beat them overside with the flat of his long sword. Conops cut the lashings that held the ships together. There was no talk needed to persuade the Northmen to flee from drunken longshoremen; they were overside before Tros could count their flitting shadows, and Tros had hardly time to run for Cæsar's cloak before the longship yielded to the tide and drifted out into the river.

For a while he let her drift and listened. He could still hardly see the approaching boats, but it was evident that their occupants had seen the longship's movement; they had stopped and were holding a consultation, paddling to keep their craft from drifting nearer until they could decide what the movement meant.

There was no wind; the longship lay helpless on the tide, useless unless Tros could set his prisoners to work and make the hirelings help them; and if he should put the Northmen to the oars there would be none to help him repel boarders.

Yet there was no knowing what the end might be if he should employ his prisoners to defend a ship that had been theirs a dozen hours ago! They, too, might force the hirelings to the oars and make a bid for freedom! He had given them back their weapons; they could overwhelm him easily.

But out of the darkness down the river movement grew again. The Britons were advancing on the bireme, keeping silence. It was more than Tros could stomach to see pirates loot a valuable ship.

"Oars!" he ordered in a low voice. "Out oars!"

Conops leaped into the ship's waist, clawing, cuffing, beating with his knife-hilt, until presently a dozen hirelings manned the benches, the remainder hugging bruises in the dark.

"Too few!" Tros muttered.

Unused to those oars and that ship, a dozen men could hardly have provided steerage way against the tide. He could count nearly a dozen boats creeping close up to the bireme.

"Helma!" he commanded, turning his head to look for her.

The Northmen, except Sigurdsen, who lay murmuring in delirium, stood and grinned at him. Helma was behind them, urging something, speaking Norse in sibilant undertones.

"Helma!" he said again; and his hand went to his sword, for the Northmen's grins were over-bold.

One of them was arguing with Helma, with what sounded like monstrous oaths.

"To your oars!" he ordered, gesturing.

None obeyed. He seized the nearest Northman hurled him into the ship's waist, spun around again to fight for dear life, drawing sword and lunging as he turned.

"Hold Tros!"

That was Helma's voice. Ears were swifter than his eyes; he heard her in midlunge and checked barely in time to let a man give ground in front of him. Helma sprang to his side then, seized his sword-hilt in both hands, bearing down on it, screaming at the prisoners in Norse.

He understood she was fighting for him, scolding, screaming at her kinsmen to obey and man the oars. He caught the word

Sigurdsen two or three times. She was invoking her brother's name.

Suddenly she let go Tros' sword and fairly drove the Northmen down in front of her, hurling imprecations at them, then watched Tros, watched what he would do, stood back in silence as he strode toward the helm, laughed when he seized it and stood at gaze, his left hand raised over his head ready to signal the rowers.

The longship had drifted away from the bireme stern-first and was now nearly beam to the tide. He signaled to the port oars first, to straighten her, then tried three strokes, both sides together, to feel what strength and speed he could command. The tide was strong, but they could move her better than he hoped, and he headed half a dozen easy strokes inshore where there was more or less slack water, due to reeds and lily-pads.

He could count nine boats now nosing toward the bireme. Two or three had disappeared, inshore probably. They were creeping cautiously as if expecting ambush. As their noses touched the bireme's shadow Tros shouted, bringing down his left hand:

"Row! Yo-ho! Yo-ho! Yo-ho!"

The longship leaped. Before the Britons in the boats could guess what the shout portended, a high prow, notched against the sky, came boiling down on them, jerking to the strain of ash oars as Conops beat time with a rope's end on the hirelings' backs. Three boats backed away in time; but six crowded ones were caught by the longship's prow, swept sidewise between the ships and crushed against the bireme's hull.

There were screams, and a splintering crash, grinding of broken timber, oaths, confusion in the longship where the rowers on the port side fell between the benches, a long, ululating cry from Helma and the longship swung alone down-river with a boiling helm as Tros threw all his weight against the steering oar.

"Now again!" he shouted, laughing. "Easier this time—with the tide!"

But the rowers needed minutes to recover equilibrium and breath. There were two men knocked unconscious by their own oar-handles. It took time to swing the longship, head up-stream. Tros roared his orders, Helma screamed interpretation of them; Conops plied the rope's end; but before the longship could be headed on her course again Tros saw the remnant of the fleet of boats scoot out of the bireme's shadow and race for the riverbank.

"Easy! Easy all!" he shouted; and again Helma studied him curiously, puckering her eyes to see his face more clearly in the gloom.

There were thumps, oaths, commotion in the ship's waist, where Conops fought three Britons. Unwisely they had sprung out of the darkness from behind to pay him for the rope's end, but they missed with their first onslaught, so the outcome was inevitable and Tros paid no attention to that minor detail. He was studying the bireme, measuring with his eye the height of water up her side. She was still heeled just a trifle, bow-end firmly on the mud.



BUT there were noises along the shadowy, marshy shoreline. Owls, half a dozen of them, rose into the night and vanished with the weird, swift flight that signified they were afraid of something. Presently sparks, then a blaze, then a whirl of red fire as a man waved a torch to get it properly alight.

Torch after torch was lighted from the first one, until the darkness fifty yards back from the riverline grew aglow with smoky crimson. The commotion in the ship's waist ceased and Conops came aft, leaning elbows on the low poop-deck.

"All ready, master," he said calmly; but he was breathing hard, and he snuffled because his nose was bleeding.

"Find a warp and come up here!" Tros ordered.

Conops disappeared again. Tros sang a "Yo-ho" song to time the oarsmen, giving just sufficient weigh to bring the ships abreast. Then, backing port oars with the aid of Helma's voice, he swung the longship's stern until it almost touched the bireme. Conops appeared then, dragging a wet rope, cursing its religion in outrageous longshore Levantine—which was a mixture of a dozen languages. Helma pounced on it and helped him haul, her muscles cracking like a firebrand.

"Jump and make fast!"

Conops nearly missed, for the longship's stern was swinging. But he had tied a small rope to the heavy warp and tied that to his waist, so he had two hands to clutch the bireme's stern. He clambered up it like a monkey and hauled the warp after

him, Helma paying out the coils as the longship drifted away, beam to the tide, Tros straightening her with slow dips of the port oars.

"Make fast!"

Helma, sea-king's daughter to the marrow of her young bones, took three turns around an oaken bollard in the stern and held that until the warp began to feel the strain, paying out a foot or two until vibration ceased, before she made fast to the other bollard.

"Both banks—way!" Tros thundered and began his "Yo-ho" song, while Helma beat time and the mud boiled blue around them.

But the bireme stuck fast, though the longship swung and swayed, heeling to one side or the other as the humming warp took the strain to port or starboard. Conops yelled suddenly. A torch came curving out of darkness to the bireme's deck, followed by yells from the longshore Britons as Conops caught that one and tossed it overboard. Then another torch, and another.

"Row! Yo-ho! Yo-ho!"

The ash oars bent and the rowers sweated in the dark. Helma ran between the benches, whirling a rope's end, beating the Britons' backs. No need to urge the Northmen; they were working for dear life, whereas the Britons were in favor of the longshore pirates.

Tros labored at the helm to keep the long ship straight and haul the bireme off the mud at the same angle that she struck. But the warp hummed and nothing happened, except that torch followed torch so fast that Conops could hardly toss them overboard.

Then Conops yelled again and vanished like a bat toward the bireme's bow. There was shouting, splashing and a red glare in the darkness at her bow-end—a thump of wood and iron as Conops levered the great anchor clear and dropped it over-side —yells as it fell on heads below.

Then the glare increased; they were bringing more torches and burning brushwood. A dozen arrows flitted through the darkness near the longship's poop. Tros roared, bull-throated, to the rowers for a final effort; but they ceased, drooped, gasping on their oars, and the longship slowly swung inshore as the warp held her stern against the tide.

Tros did not dare to let his crew of Britons get too near the riverbank; they would mutiny and join their friends. Nor could he let the warp go; he would have died rather than leave Conops at the mercy of drunken savages.

"Now if Lud of Lunden would give me a south wind——"

But Lud did better. He made some one mad. Tros would have needed time to set the sail. A shadowy boat flitted through the darkness and shot close up to the bireme's bow. A flat blast on a cow-horn split the night. Followed yelling. The red glare faded, giving place to moving shadows and din or argument. Conops returned in leaps to the bireme's stern and shouted, waving both hands.

"Way! Way! Yo-ho!" Tros thundered.

Helma plied the rope's-end; the exhausted oarsmen strained, half-mutinous; the longship heeled and turned her head to midstream, until suddenly Tros laid his whole weight and strength on the steering-oar and the bireme slid gently backward off the mud. The tide had lifted her at last.

They towed her stern-first for a mile, until the longshore shouting died in the distance. Then Tros backed oars in a wide reach of the river and lay alongside until Conops could make the warp fast in the bow, so as to bring the bireme's head up-stream.

"Who was it saved us?" he asked Conops.

"Tide and a madman, master! Skell came over-river, blew a horn-blast, startled them, told them then he knew Cæsar's gold was in the bireme, offered them half of it if they would cut the warp and scare you off before they set fire to anything, kept them talking until the tide crept under her. This Lud of Lunden is a pretty decent sort of god!"

"Aye, Lud of Lunden! Aye," Tros muttered. "Aye. I knew there was a reason for preserving Skell! Lud of Lunden! I will make a little giftlet to that godlet. I believe he smiles on effort. He shall laugh!"

CHAPTER VII

IN LUNDEN POOL

A GRAY, wet dawn was paling in the sky when Tros dropped anchor in the pool below the ford by Lunden Town. Caswallon's mouse-hued wooden roof, green-splashed with lichen, loomed through drifting mist between the autumn-tinted oaks.

Tros sighed for his sun-lit Mediterranean,

but he noticed that his Northmen prisoners, oar-weary though they were and stiff from the fighting of the day before, were in an environment they liked.

They sniffed the autumn air, leaned overside and praised the lush green meadows, nodded to one another sleepily as wooden and thatched roofs, barns and neat enclosures peeped out of the mist a moment to vanish again like dreams of fairyland. The lowing of cows asking to be milked appeared to fill them with excitement. They spoke of wealth in whispers.

Sigurdsen's high fever had abated. He had slept like a child and now seemed hardly to understand what had happened to him; his wife was talking in low tones, he answering in grunts, fingering the edge of the great battle-ax that lay across his knees and glancing from his wife to Helma, who sat facing him. The other woman was still keening her dead husband.

The Lunden Britons were late sleepers. Not a human being stirred along the waterfront on either side of the river, although a dog howled a general alarm and a whole pack joined him, galloping from house yards to patrol the river and bay indignant challenge to the skies. There were several rotting ships among the reeds, all smaller than the longship, and not one even river-worthy.

"This will never be a nation!" Tros reflected. "There is no hope for them. Think of bringing two ships into Ostia, Tarentum, the Piræus, Smyrna, Alexandria, and none but a pack of dogs to give the challenge! They will be overwhelmed by foreigners. They will cease. A hundred years hence none will know the name of Britain."

But he was nearly as tired out as his oarsmen and as Conops, in no true mood for prophecy. Unlike them, he might not curl himself to sleep under the benches. He had no more fear on account of his British hirelings, who would stick like leeches now until he paid them. But he did not propose to be caught asleep by any of Caswallon's men, who might remove his prisoners, might even execute them, especially if Caswallon should be away from home; and that seemed likely.

He thought it strange, otherwise, that there should be none to receive him and bid him welcome, for the sake of good manners, however unfriendly they might feel. Caswallon must have known he would bring both ships up-river. Or—the thought stirred Tros to rumbling anger—had Caswallon left him purposely hard and fast on the river mud in hope that longshore pirates would wipe a difficulty off the slate? To be roundly punished for it afterward, no doubt, since kings must punish criminals and friendships must be honored. When the first hot flush of indignation died he decided to give Caswallon the benefit of that doubt; but he found it difficult, knowing that kings have harder work than other men to keep faith, subtler means of breaking it, and more excuse. There was Cæsar's gold, for instance.

When he had watched shore-bearings for a while to make sure the anchor held, he turned to Helma, hoping to take his mind off one worry by considering another.

"How did you learn Gaulish?" he asked

"Some of us always do," she answered. "Don't we need it when we raid the coasts? I learned it from my nurse, who was a Briton taken in a raid and carried off to Malmoe. Britons are good servants, once they yield. She worked hard, I loved her."

"Love? Or was it belly-yearning?" Tros asked. "I have heard tell that Northmen think of nothing else but fighting, feasting and taking wives."

"None has had me to wife!" she retorted, and there was pride in her blue eyes such as Tros had never seen.

"Well—well you behaved last night," he said, looking straight at her. "You are a poor cook, for you burned the stew; but you shall cook no more for me. What shall be done with you? Speak. Will you return to Malmoe?"

She bit her lip, then stabbed out words like dagger-blades.

"The men of Helsing drove my brother forth. Shall I return and serve them, saying that with my brother's ship I bought myself to give to them?"

"You hate me. Why did you stand by me in the pinch last night?" Tros asked.

"I am a sea-king's daughter! Should I side with *pirates?*" she demanded.

"What were you when you raided the Thames or when you burned a south coast village?" Tros inquired.

"Good Norse stock!" she retorted. "We are vikings!*"

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*Vikings: the word means, literally, "Creek-men" and is probably a great deal older than the period of this story; originally a term of contempt it ended, like similar words in other languages, by being proudly adopted by those whom it was coined to offend.

Tros was puzzled.

"What if I should take you back to Malmoe, and try an issue with the men of Helsing and reestablish you? What then?"

"Ah, you laugh at me." But there was no laughter in his eyes, and she was watching them. "You might make my brother a king again, for you are a bold man and you can handle a ship. But the scalds would call me a black-haired foreigner's wife until the very serving-wenches mocked me."

"Said I one word about wifing?" Tros asked, astonished.

But she was astonished, too; backed away two steps from him looking as if he had struck her with a whip.

"I am a prisoner by my brother's oath of battle. I must abide that," she answered. "You are a prince? Have you a wife?"

"No," said Tros, watching her.

He knew now she was much more puzzled than he had been.

"You will not degrade me," she said with an air of confidence.

She implied they had both been talking in a foreign tongue and so could hardly understand each other. Biting her lip again, she calmed herself, made a nervous effort to be patient with him.

"I will speak with Olaf Sigurdsen," said Tros, and strode to where the Northman leaned against the stern all swathed in bandages, nervously thumbing his ax-hilt.

But Sigurdsen knew no Gaulish other than the words for mast and oar, beef, beer and a dozen place-names. Helma had to stand there and interpret.

"What shall I do with her?" Tros asked, signifying Helma with a sidewise motion of his head.

"She is yours!" said the Northman, astonished. "You won her!"

Helma interpreted, mimicking even the voice-note. Suddenly, as if she thought Tros had not understood yet, she pulled off her amber-and-gold shoulder ornaments and thrust them toward him.

"Have you a wife?" asked Sigurdsen.

Helma translated. Sigurdsen's wife stood up beside her husband, staring at Tros as if he were some new kind of creature she had never heard of. She began whispering, and Sigurdsen nodded, spoke, with a note of grandeur in his voice.

"What does he say?" Tros demanded.

"He says—you returned him his weapon; you accepted his oath as a free man; but you did not say you returned me to him. Nevertheless, perhaps you meant that. Therefore, he being my brother and a king's son although without fief or following, and you his conqueror in battle and his sworn friend, he swears by Thor and Odin and his ax-blade I am born in noble wedlock and a fit bride; and he gives me to you, to be wife and to share your destiny on land and sea."

"Zeus!"



NO THOUGHT of marrying had ever entered Tros' head, except as something he would never do. He made no oath, but he had seen too many men grow fat and lazy in the meshes of a family not to promise himself he would die free of woman's ministering. He had something of his father's conviction that marriage was earthy of the earth, a good enough thing for the rabble but a trap that kept a strong soul from aspiring to the heights.

Sigurdsen spoke again, not knowing who Zeus might be, not understanding the explosion. He had never heard of a man's refusing a king's daughter.

"She is fair. She is young. She is a virgin. Call her wife before the Britons come and men speak ill of her."

Helma had to translate. She did it in womanlywise, her blue eyes—they were more blue than the northern sky—accepting destiny as something to be met and very proudly borne.

"I think you did not understand me yesterday," she said. "Nor I you. You are a brave man, Tros, and I will bear you sons of whom you shall not be ashamed."

Brave! Tros felt as weak as a seasick landsman! He was ashamed. He might refuse, and he would hate himself. He might accept, and learn to hate the woman! He might give her to some other man, and evermore regret it. Why had he taken prisoners? Why hadn't he made a gift of them to Caswallon when he had the chance?

Slowly—he was striving to hear the inner voice that usually guided; but either the inner man was deaf or the voice was sleeping. He let his left hand leave his sword-hilt; he did not know why. She stepped closer, smiling. Both arms stretched toward the girl before he knew it. She came into them, her head on his breast and at that very moment Conops wakened.

"Master!"

It was the exclamation of a man bereft of faith in the one eye that Cæsar's torturers had left him. Love-and-run in half the ports of the Levant was Conops' history, brief interludes of lazy days and tavern-haunting nights between long spells of hardship and service to Tros on land and sea. Loose, superstitious morals for himself but rigorous aloofness for his master from all worldly ways, was his religion. He had but one eye because he had dared to rebuke Cæsar for insulting Tros. He rubbed the other one, crestfallen, as if the Tros he knew were gone and some one substituted whom he could not recognize.

Tros with a girl in his arms? He could not believe it. He came and glared, the tassel of his red cap down over his empty eye; the long tooth sneering through the slit in his upper lip; blood on his nose from yesterday. He fingered his long knife. He sidled three-quarters of a circle around Helma as if looking for an un-witch-protected opening through which to drive his knife.

"Master! And your father not buried!" he said, hardly reproachfully, rather as if he did not believe his senses.

He was jealous—jealous as a harbor-strumpet of a rival light o' love. The slobber blew in bubbles on his lean lips.

"Dionusus!"

Tros was in no mood to be reproved by a servant. He let out a lick with his fist—caught Conops on the ear and sent him sprawling between the oar-benches.

"Dog!" he thundered. "Will you judge your betters?"

Conops did not hear that. He lay hugging his bruised head, grateful for it, glad of anything that drove the greater anguish out of mind, rocking himself, moaning, knees and elbows bunched.

Angry—for emotions such as Tros had come through turn to anger as the sour milk turns to whey—Tros swung his hands behind him and stood breast out, grim chin high, staring at the shore, ignoring Helma. She was the real irritant. He told himself it was not born in him to love a woman. If he had thought he loved her—had he?—that was only the emotion of a drunken sailor. Worse! it was sordid backsliding. A descent from his own Olympian heights of manhood to the common level of unmoral fools like Conops!

What would old Perseus have said to it? Hah! Old father Perseus did the same thing, didn't he? Tros wondered who his own mother had been, and by what means she had wheedled a middle-aged saint into the snares of marriage!

Tros knew she had died when he was born, but others had told him she was a royal woman, born of a line of kings whose throne was overturned by Rome. Perseus had forbidden speech of her, and as usual Tros had obeyed, only listening when other men dropped information.

Her death, as far as Perseus was concerned, had closed a life's chapter; thenceforth he had preached celibacy, not failing to instill into his son a wholesome—was it wholesome?—dread of women, or rather of the love of women and of the loss of spiritual vision that ensued from it.

"Yet here am I!" said Tros, his hands clenched tight behind him. "But for Perseus and a woman, I should not have been! I live! By Zeus and the immortal gods, I laugh!"

But he did not laugh. It irked him that Helma's eyes were on his back. He wished he had struck Conops harder. He wished all Lunden would awake and come down to the waterside. He would have welcomed anything just then, anything to save him the necessity of speech with Helma. He hated the girl! She and destiny between them had made a fine fool of him!

Yet as he turned to meet her gaze a new shame reddened his cheeks under the bronze. He realized he did not hate her. He knew he would be ashamed to withdraw the unspoken pledge he had made when he took her in his arms. She was his wife! He wished he had killed Conops!



HE HELD out his hand to her with a stubborn gesture, drew her beside him, made her stand hand-in-hand with him there on the ship's stern, gesturing to Olaf Sigurdsen to rouse his Northmen. And when they had rubbed sleep out of their eyes they stood up, grinning, until it dawned on them that something else was due.

Sigurdsen led the cheering then shaking his great battle-ax; and the din carried over-water to the houses near the riverbank, so that a dozen Britons came to stare, hitching their ungainly looking trousers.

Presently—being Britons, who would

rather ride a dozen miles than walk one—horsemen came, riding bare-backed mounts into the river. A yellow-haired expert swam his horse all the way out to the longship, and mounted the stern, leaving the horse to swim where it chose.

"Lud love you!" he said, grinning, patting himself to squeeze water from his clothes. He eyed Helma appraisingly. "Norse girls are good. Those cursed red sea-robbers steal more of ours than we ever see of theirs, though! Wife, or ransom?" he asked not pausing for an answer. "Caswallon took some prisoners, but they say there's no hope of ransom; some other gang of pirates drove them forth, so they came to seize holding in Britain. No homes—no friends! Still—is she a virgin?

"She's a well-bred filly. Those Northmen who raided her home might like to pay a long price for her. Lud love me! Is that Sigurdsen? What have you done to him, Tros? He fought his way out of the woods without a scratch on him. What's he doing with his ax? He's a prisoner, isn't he? Lud look at them! They're all armed! Who's the prisoner—you?"

"Where is Caswallon?" Tros asked him.

"Over on the hilltop with the druids, hours away, loving the wounded, you know; wants to be popular. But it won't work. There are too many who say he shouldn't have fitted out your expedition, sixty or seventy killed and maimed. Lud think of it! As if these bloody Northmen weren't trouble enough!

"And there's a woman from Gaul—wait till you see her! You'll soon forget that one, Tros! She had a letter for you from Cæsar. Caswallon burned it in a rage, but she says she knows what Cæsar wrote, and she'll tell you. Caswallon didn't dare to treat her roughly, because half of us fell hide-and-hoof in love with her, and there are plenty who say he ought to make terms with Cæsar.

"She says you and Cæsar understand each other, and we all want to know what Cæsar's terms are. Skell came shortly after midnight, wandered all over town trying to wake people, but we were too tired to listen to him. Besides, Skell is a liar. He's in his own house now. I saw the smoke as I came by."

"Skell?" said Tros.

"Yes, Skell, the box you packed off to Caritia to talk to Cæsar. Skell the liar, Skell who *said* you helped him to wreck Cæsar's fleet, although everybody knew you did it all alone. Why didn't you kill him, Tros? Skell said something last night about having saved you in the river—longshoremen or something. Nobody believed him. He said you'd sent him ahead to warn us all not to listen to anything Caswallon says until we've heard you."

"Where is Fflur?" Tros asked, when the youngster paused for breath.

"With Caswallon, getting in the druids' way, I suppose, helping to hurt the wounded. What are you going to do with this ship? Burn it? Say—that's a good idea! Burn both ships! Make a floating bonfire in the Pool tonight! Tonight's the funeral. All the countryside in procession from Lunden to the burying-ground, chariots, torches. They say your father's corpse'll be right in front, ahead of everything except old 'Longbeard.' Why not have a bonfire of two ships when we come back? Something to show Cæsar's woman. Show her we Britons can stage a circus too!"

He paused for breath again.

"Where is Orwic?" Tros inquired.

"Nursing himself and trying to rule Lunden. Caswallon left him in charge. But Orwic isn't popular just now—lost too many men on your expedition. Everybody says it must have been his fault. And no loot—didn't bring a stick of loot back with him from Gaul.

"Everybody says, 'Caswallon's nephew is Caswallon's man,' and the chief hasn't been popular these ten days past. Besides, why did Orwic wait so long before he came to help us in the woods? Say, did you see me cut down three Northmen on the run, right down by the riverbank there, where the mud's deep and the thicket goes clear to the water?

"They're trying to make out now that I had help. Three men claim they were in that with me; but maybe you saw from across the river. Did you? Maybe you can swear I did it single-handed. Three great brutes of Northmen as big as Sigurdsen there! Did you hear the first one roar when I stuck a spear in him?

"The other two went down silent, but the first one made noise enough for all three. Did you hear him? Their weapons and armor are held for prize-court and those others'll lie me out of them unless you can uphold me. Can you?"

Tros did not answer. Orwic's boat came hurrying out of the reeds, and Orwic hailed him.

"Lud!" exclaimed the visitor. "Where's my horse? Gone? No matter!"

He plunged into the river and swam shoreward. Orwic, standing in a boat's stern, could not help but see him; he stared hard, watched the yellow head go rippling like a water-rat, but said nothing. He boarded the longship, saluting Tros with a genial grin that, nevertheless, not more than masked a feeling of restraint.

"Skell is here," he said, pursing his lips, staring hard at Helma. "So is Cornelia, a Gaulish woman with Roman paint on her. She says she knows you, Tros."

"She lies. She lies," Tros answered calmly.

"So does Skell!" said Orwic. "But they both lie artfully! The woman says Cæsar has appointed you his agent here in Britain. Skell says he preserved you from the river-pirates, in return for which you and he made peace. He says you grant him the protection of your privilege. Is that true? Is there any truth in it?"

"You were with me, Orwic. You heard all I said to Cæsar."

"Aye, but I know no Latin, Tros! I know you called me off when I was hard at Cæsar with eight men in the bireme's bows. What about Skell? Did you promise him anything?"

Tros grew hot under the bandages that swathed his head. He tore them off.

"I promised you my friendship!" he said grimly.

"Yes, I know you did. You beat me in fair fight, and I took your hand, Tros. Haven't I stood by you since? Caswallon is your friend, too. But don't forget, Tros, Caswallon is king here, and you are a foreigner. Your life and your goods are in our safe-keeping, but if you make difficulties for us we must think of ourselves first."

"If I am not welcome, I will go!" Tros answered.

Orwic hesitated, stroking his mustache. Tros' thought leaped to the chest of Cæsar's gold that Fflur, Caswallon's wife, was supposed to be keeping for him. Thoughtfully he eyed his Northmen prisoners, and wondered whether he could manage the longship with that scant crew. There was the Belgian coast; he might make that. And there was the unknown Norse country, that his bones almost ached to explore.

"I would bid you go," Orwic said at last, "but I dare not. There are too many now who believe you bring Cæsar's message, and they want to hear it. There are too many who accuse Caswallon of having sent you to make overtures to Cæsar; too many, again, who believe the contrary and blame Caswallon for having sent you to stir Cæsar against us. We are all divided.

"Some say Caswallon looks to Cæsar to make him king over all Britain; others say Cæsar will conquer Britain first and crucify Caswallon afterwards! There are some who want to kill you, Tros, and some who want to honor you as Cæsar's messenger."

"What say the druids?" Tros asked.

"That they will bury your father's body. And that unless we can persuade you there will be none to answer all these tales. They say: If you should go, then all men would declare Caswallon was afraid of you, and would turn against him; but if you should stay, Britons will be at one another's throats within a day or two!"

He paused a moment, watching Tros' eyes steadily, then suddenly advanced with a dramatic gesture.

"Tros, I speak you frankly! If we, Caswallon's friends, should treat you as less than an honored guest, your life would be in danger from our own hot-heads, who are ready to admire you if Caswallon does, or to hate you if he doesn't. They will follow his lead.

"But if we honor you, then Caswallon's enemies will hurl that as a charge against him. Nevertheless, those same men will befriend you, if you let them, and make use of you to attack Caswallon! What do you say, Tros?"

"I? What should I say?" Tros answered. "What do I care for the feuds of Briton against Briton? I come to attend my father's funeral."

"Are you Cæsar's man?" asked Orwic.



TROS flew into a rage at that. He clenched his fists and answered in a voice that made the Northmen jump and brought Conops knife in hand from between the benches.

"No! By Zeus and the dome of heaven, no! Do you understand what no means? Rot you and your muddy Lud of Lunden!

Rot you all! I vomit on you! Cæsar may help himself to your wives and children! Let him enslave you! What do I care! *War-r-r-ugh!* You bickering fools—town against town—you are worse than my own Greeks!

"Do you listen to your druids? No! Do you listen to your chiefs? No! What do you listen to? Your belly-rumblings! You believe your colic is a cosmic urge! You think your island is the middle of the universe!

"You accuse your friends and make love to your enemies! You and your chariots! Look at your ships there, rotting! Look at me—" Tros struck his breast—"I grieve! Look at me! I weep! Why? On your account? The gods forbid it! I hope Cæsar treads you underfoot! I grieve that my father's dust must mingle with the dirt of Britain! Wo is me! Wo that I ever set foot in Britain!"

"Peace!" said Orwic, but Tros turned away from him, shaking with fury.

His violence had reopened the wound on his cheek and Helma stanched the blood, using the bandage he had tossed aside. Conops whispered to him; he struck Conops, hurling him headlong again between the benches. Then, black with anger, he strode up close to Orwic, hands behind him.

"Tell Caswallon, I attend my father's funeral. Say this: By Zeus I'll solve his difficulties! Can he fight? Is he a man? Hah! Let him believe either me, or else Skell and these other liars! Let him waste no time about it! If he chooses to call me an enemy, he shall fight me before all Lunden!"

Orwic forced a smile and tried to pour the oil of jest on anger.

"How would that help? They would say you fought him for the kingdom, Tros!"

"Caswallon's kingdom? I? That for it!" Tros spat into the river. "Hah! Barter my freedom for the right to be disobeyed and chorused by long-haired horse-copers? Gods listen to him! Tell Caswallon I wouldn't thank him for what he calls his kingdom! Tell him I doubt his friendship! Bid him haste and prove it or else fight me! Go tell him!"

"Tros, those are unwise words!" said Orwic.

"They are mine! This is my sword!" Tros answered, tapping the gilded hilt of his long weapon.

"Tros, you and I swore friendship."

"Swore? What is a man's oath worth! Show me the friendship!"

"Tros, I spoke you fair. I only told you how the matter lies. I asked an honest question."

"Zeus! I gave an honest answer! Call me friend or enemy! By Zeus, it means nothing to me which way a fish jumps!"

"Your eyes burn. You are tired, Tros."

"Aye! Tired of you Britons and your ways! 'Am I Cæsar's man!' Ye gods of sea and earth! Get off my ship!"

But Orwic did not move, except to smile and hold his hand out.

"Nay, Tros. I rule Lunden in Caswallon's absence. Welcome to Lunden! I speak in Caswallon's name."

He showed a great ring on this thumb. Tros glared at it.

"I know you are not Cæsar's man," said Orwic.

At which Tros flew into another fury.

"Pantheon of Heaven! You! You know that? You, who saw me wreck all Cæsar's ships! You, who were with me at Seinemouth and saw me rape Cæsar's lair! You, who saw my father's tortured body! You! You know I am not Cæsar's man—because I said it?"

Orwic smiled again, his hand outheld.

"You will admit, Tros, that you said it with a certain emphasis. A man may be excused if he believes you."

"Take my message to Caswallon!"

"I stand in Caswallon's place. I speak for him. I have received the message. I prefer to call you friend."

"Words again?" Tros asked.

He felt disappointed. He had enjoyed the burst of anger. In the moment's mood it would have suited him to carry challenge to conclusion.

"No more words," said Orwic. "Give me your hand, Tros. There."

He stepped close and embraced him, smearing his own cheek with Tros' blood.

"Welcome to Lunden! Now I go to make a good room ready for you in Caswallon's house."

"Young cockerel! Brave young cockerel!" Tros muttered, watching him overside, then turning suddenly to Helma:

"That is the man you should have married! Shall I give you to him? Orwic is the best bred cockerel in Britain."

She looked puzzled, wondering whether he imagined that was humor.

"I am pledged to you, Tros."

"I will free you."

"No. He is only a Briton. You are a sea-king. I will bear your sons."

"Zeus!" he muttered, wondering. "Has all the world gone mad? Come here!" he ordered.

When she came, he kissed her and Conops cried shame at him from beneath an oar-bench. It was a dawn of mixed emotions as opaque and changing as the Lunden mist.

CHAPTER VIII

CORNELIA OF GAUL

SO TROS' prisoners—since he had freed them and they were now his henchmen—became Caswallon's guests along with Tros in the great house on the hill top. In Caswallon's absence Orwic showed them almost too much courtesy, to the annoyance of servants and fair-haired British men-at-arms who luonged in the great hall or amused themselves at horse-play in the yard.

But it gave the Northmen an enormously high opinion of Tros; and when Orwic brought out Cæsar's treasure chest, so that Tros might pay off his hireling seamen, even Sigurdsen began to boast of being Tros' adherent and Helma put on airs toward the British women, who were friendly enough until she began almost to patronize them.

So the Britons brought forth horses and compelled the Northmen to try to ride, mounting them two on a horse; and into the deriding mob of onlookers Cornelia came, attended by a crowd of young bloods dressed in their choicest finery, wearing enough gold and bronze and amber among them to have overpaid one of Cæsar's legions for a year.

While they were laughing at the Northmen's efforts to ride half-broken stallions scared into a frenzy by men who despised the sea as only fit for fishermen, Cornelia studied Tros from a distance.

He had done paying his hirelings and was counting the rest of the gold, or rather pretending to count it, watching her betweenwhiles as adroitly as she watched him, each avoiding the other's eyes. Gathering her escort around her at last, she made her way outside the crowd toward where Tros sat on a chair on Caswallon's porch.

She walked with dignity that she had imitated from the Romans. Her dress and jewelry were Roman, aping the patrician style, pure white with a golden border, and she showed no trace of having suffered on her stormy way from Gaul. Her dark hair glistened in a net that held it massed behind her neck; gilded sandals decorated rather than concealed her feet. She looked expensive and calmly impudent. But her stock-in-trade was nothing tangible, although it was all in evidence: An air of knowing more than anybody else knew, of having influence that none could undermine, of laughing at life because she held the keys of fortune.

Those keys, too, were evident, brown eyes beneath long, dark lashes; carmine, daring, not exactly scornful but mocking lips; a figure that suggested limitless immodesty beneath cultured poise; a gown that clung precisely where it should cling to excite emotion when she moved with that apparently unstudied ease.

Tros knew her type. Helma did not, and stood nearer to him, light of northern sky blazing under flaxen brows, Norse jealousy hardening her young face. Helma was afraid; Tros felt her trembling when her elbow touched his. But the Gaulish woman with the Roman name had trained herself in far too many swift intrigues to show fear, even if she felt it. Rome had made a hundred conquests in the wake of women of her genius; and before Rome, Nineveh. Inborn in her was all the grace of courts and all the spirit of destruction.

"The noble Tros?" she asked, coming to a stand in front of him, not trespassing yet on Caswallon's porch.

And Tros was not yet minded that she should. He did not rise. He kicked his long sword outward so that its hilt rested on his knees and he could lay both hands on it, leaning back in the chair to stare insolently through suspicious, slumberous eyes.

"My name is Tros."

"I am Cornelia."

"Cæsar's light o' love?" he asked, raising shaggy black eyebrows just sufficiently to barb the insult. "Cæsar's slave?"

Helma, behind him, touched his shoulder gratefully. Conops, seated on Cæsar's treasure-chest, showed three more teeth through the slit in his upper-lip, rose and disappeared into the house.

"Cæsar's messenger!" the Gaulish woman answered.

There was no iron in her voice; nothing but challenging laughter. Cæsar had not

picked a thin-skinned fool to pave Rome's way to conquest.

Conops came out of the house with Cæsar's scarlet cloak and draped it on Tros' shoulders, Helma assisting to arrange it, half-guessing its significance although she did not know that Tros had looted it along with the Roman's bireme.

The young Britons who had appointed themselves Cornelia's body-guard began to whisper to her. One of them grew bold and raised his voice—

"Tros, your insolence insults us all!"

Tros sneered; his mood was cynical. Orwic came out of the house to stand behind him. Orwic being in authority just then the crowd grew still, until Cornelia spoke in Latin:

"Cæsar's cloak, Tros! You foreshadow Cæsar! He will take that for an omen when I tell him Tros sat cloaked in imperial scarlet on the porch of Caswallon's house!"

"They talk Latin!" some one shouted. "Tros is Cæsar's man!"

There were more than a hundred people by that time on the green before Caswallon's house, not counting the stable-hands and other serfs, who were hardly to be reckoned with, not daring to offend their betters; some were men who had come too late to fight the Northmen, jealous of the victors' spoils and very anxious to assert themselves.

A tumult began, a few of them denouncing Tros as an intriguer, some shouting that Cæsar's message should be heard. A noisy, small group, nearest to the gate and safety, denounced Caswallon. Orwic swore under his breath, using the names of a dozen Celtish gods. Tros whispered to Conops:

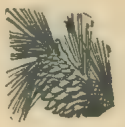
"Bid my Northmen gather themselves behind the house and enter it from the rear. Take charge of them. Add yourselves to Orwic's men. Be swift."

Then he turned to Orwic.

"Now or never!" he said, with a careless shrug of his shoulders. "Is Caswallon king in Lunden? Gently, boy, gently! Not yet. Leave this to me. I will show you who rules this end of Britain!"

He stood up, letting his face light with laughter, gathering Cæsar's scarlet cloak around him. He addressed Cornelia, but in a voice that all the crowd could hear, and he spoke slowly, in Gaulish, as if answering her speech, and taking care that all should understand him, in spite of his foreign accent:

"Aye, woman! This was Cæsar's cloak. You, who were Cæsar's light o' love until he sent you to cozen me, were not so very clever when you recognized it! I am told you brought me a letter from Cæsar. I am told Caswallon burned it. I am told you are warning the Britons not to listen to Caswallon until they first hear me. Well: They shall hear me now. I am Caswallon's guest!"



HE COULD hear a tramping through the house behind him as the Northmen came with Conops to reenforce Orwic's men. There was a noise of weapons being lifted from the racks.

"Cæsar sent you to me. Are you ready, Orwic?" he whispered. "March out and surround her when I give the word! Therefore you are mine. I will see that none perverts you from right conduct in the realm of him who is host to both of us! Come!" he commanded, beckoning.

Cornelia appealed to her escort, too late. Orwic took the cue and rushed from the porch with forty men-at-arms behind him, twelve of them Northmen very anxious to repay bruises done at horse-play. It was risky work; the Northmen, fierce enemies a day ago, were likelier than not to cause indignant bloodshed; safety lay in doing the work so swiftly that there would be no time for a crowd without a leader to decide whether it really was indignant or was half-amused.

Conops and the Northmen surrounded Cornelia; Orwic and his Britons who thrust themselves between the Northmen and her British escort, joining spears before them like a fence-rail, forcing the astonished escort backward on their heels. And while Orwic accomplished that, Tros shouted, throwing up his right arm, shaking Cæsar's scarlet cloak to distract attention to himself:

"Ho, there! Caswallon's friends! There is a rat named Skell who brought this Cæsar's woman to cheat away your freedom! Where is Skell?"

Caswallon's friends were fewer than his enemies in that crowd, but the impulse of surprize was in their favor. By the time Cornelia had been hustled into the great hall in the midst of a group of grinning Northmen, who handled her none too gently, the loyalists had started a diversion, shout and

counter-shout, that served until Orwic's summons on a silver bugle brought a dozen chariots charging from the stable to clear the green of friend and enemy alike. The crowd did not even try to stand against the chariots, although the front ones had no scythes fixed to the wheels. But there were two chariots in the rear that could have mown a crimson swath.

"And now swiftly!" said Tros, when Orwic strolled back to the porch trying to look self-possessed. "Where are those Northmen prisoners Caswallon took in the fight in the forest?"

"What of them? There are only three-and-twenty, some of them pretty badly hurt," said Orwic.

"Where are they? I know mobs! Your Britons will say that it was Northmen who snatched that woman away. They will kill those three-and-twenty! Then, they will come to kill my twelve and Sigurdsen! Then me, then you!"

"Bah! Who cares if they kill Northmen!" Orwic answered.

"I for one! Blood-lust grows. They will kill Caswallon next! Smuggle those prisoners to this place. Start a hue-and-cry at Skell's heels; that fox will give them a run to keep all Lunden busy! Send for Caswallon then, and bid him hurry. Bid him bring Fflur with him!"

Orwic hesitated, but Tros took him by the shoulders.

"Am I friend or enemy?" he thundered. "Boy! That woman will win Britain for Cæsar yet unless you act swiftly!"

Orwic yielded only half convinced and hurried away to instruct his friends, shutting the great gate and posting guards to keep another crowd from forming. Tros strode into the house, swaggering as if he owned it. Cornelia was seated near Caswallon's great chair under the balcony at one end of the hall; her dress was ruffled and a little torn, but she was laughing at the men who stared at her, and she mocked Tros, gesturing at Helma:

"Ah! You seize me, when you have that beautiful fair-haired prisoner! What use for poor me, when——"

"I have a use for you!" Tros interrupted; and the hall grew still. "You were Cæsar's slave. Now you are mine!"

She was startled, but the scared look vanished in an instant; she had the professional intriguer's self-control. It was Helma who turned pale and came and stood beside Tros, watching his face.

"Tros!" said the woman of Gaul, speaking Latin, "Cæsar told me you are proud, and full of guile, and a great keeper of rash promises. You promised him enmity. You wrecked his fleet. You forged Cæsar's name and stole your father from the grip of three camped legions.

"That was an indignity to Rome as well as Cæsar. You sunk Cæsar's boats; you slew his men; you ducked Cæsar himself in the tide at Seine-mouth. So you kept your rash promise.

"Yet Cæsar's magnanimity is greater than the malice that pursues him. He is willing to forgive. He offers you full recognition by the Roman Senate and command of fifty ships, if you withdraw your enmity and promise him allegiance! I am Cæsar's messenger, not your slave."

Tros answered her in Gaulish—

"When I need fifty of Cæsar's ships, I will take them without his leave or Rome's!"

But that was for the Britons' ears. He had in mind more than to bandy words.

"Tros——" she began again.

"Silence!" he commanded.

Then he pointed to the door of an inner room between the great hall and Caswallon's quarters. Helma bit her lip, and several of the men-at-arms laughed loud. But Tros kept on pointing, and he looked imperious in Cæsar's scarlet cloak.

So Cornelia rose out of her chair, bowed, smirked almost imperceptibly at Helma, and let the way in through the door, glancing over-shoulder in a way that gave Tros pause. He beckoned Helma.

"Bring your brother's wife and the widow!" he commanded.

So three Norse women followed Tros into the dimly lighted room; and one of them knew Gaulish. There were benches in there for men-at-arms, and one chair, on which Cornelia sat uninvited, arranging her draperies to show the shapely outline of her figure.

Tros slammed the door and slid the wooden bolt in place, with a nod to Helma and the other women to be seated on the benches. He seized Cornelia's chair then and dragged it into the shaft of light that fell through the one small window. He craved sleep, and had not time to waste.

"Turn your face to the light!" he commanded. "Keep it so! Now, no evasions!

I am in no mood to split thin hairs of courtesy!"

"Truly, Tros, your courtesy is thin," she answered. "Cæsar is never discourteous, even to his enemies. I was told you are a prince's son. Where you were born are manners thought unmanly?"

"Answer this!" He rapped his sword-hilt on a table that he dragged up to the window-light. "What was written in Cæsar's letter that Caswallon took from you and burned?"

She smiled and tossed her head. "I gave it to the lord Caswallon. He had manners. He was too polite to take it from me!"

"What was written in the letter?"

"Since the letter was burned, what matters what was written in it!"

Her dark eyes dared him.

Tros drew his sword, his great chin coming forward with a jerk. He let the sword-point fall until it touched her bare throat.

"Answer me!"

Her eyes turned slightly inward as she looked along the sword-blade toward the marvelously steady hilt, but she did not wince. The sword-point pricked the skin. She did not even flinch from it.

"I will not tell! And you dare not kill me!"

Tros let the sword-point fall until it touched her naked foot between the crossed thongs of her sandal. A dancing-woman's foot was where her fear might lie closest to the surface! But she laughed.

"Before these women, Tros! What would the Britons say to you? Cæsar may torture women, and you might—though I think not, for I see a weakness—but the Britons don't even whip their children. Would Caswallon forgive you if you should nail my foot to the floor in his house?"



TROS owned to the weakness she divined in him. He could kill, in cold blood or in anger, but the very thought of torture made him grit his teeth. The half of his hatred of Cæsar was due to his contempt for Cæsar's practises; he liked the Britons because they did not practise cruelty.

But he could be cruel in another way. Compunction that prevented torturing man or woman implied no inhibition against mental terrorism. He could hardly bear to see a fish gaffed if the hook would serve, and could not kill a cur like Skell unless his own life were in danger, but he could be as ruthless as the sea, as practical as fate in matching means to ends.

His eyes changed, and the woman noticed it. He glanced at Helma.

"Bring my man Conops!" he commanded, and he set his sword-point on the floor between his feet, to lean on it and wait.

He did not have to wait long. As Helma drew the bolt the door swung inward. Conops lurched into the room, shielding his head with his arm, in fear of the blow he had earned by eavesdropping, too wise in his master's ways to offer an excuse.

When the blow did not fall he peeped over his arm, then dropped the arm, blinked his eye and grinned, knowing danger was over. Tros' punishments were prompt, or else not meted out at all.

"News?" Tros asked him.

"None, master. Only I heard say they are hunting Skell; and a chariot went for Caswallon."

"Caswallon is coming, eh? Have you a wife?"

Tros knew the answer, but he chose that Cornelia should learn the truth from Conops' lips.

"No, master—surely you know that! The last woman I——"

A frown convinced him he had said enough.

Tros turned to Cornelia.

"This man is no beauty, is he! He is not well bred. His manners are of the forepeak quality. He disciplines a woman with a knife-hilt. He is single. He is old enough to marry. He would serve me better if he had a wife to keep him from longshore escapades. I will give you to Conops to be his wife—his wife, you understand me? Conops is a free man, he can own a wife."

He had her! She was out of the chair, indignant, terrified, appealing to the other women, ready to scream, in a panic, struggling to control herself. Tros' threat was something he could easily fulfil, since she was his by all the written and unwritten laws.

If she should claim that she was Cæsar's slave, then Tros, as Cæsar's enemy, might do as he pleased with her by right of capture, she having been sent to use her wiles on him, not on Caswallon. If she should declare herself a free-woman, she might fool

Britons but not Tros, who knew the Roman law and knew the dreadful penalties that even Cæsar, who had sent her, would be forced to inflict should she be returned to him branded, a slave who had claimed to be free.

If Tros should make a gift of her to Conops, the Britons might be offended, but there would be no chance of their interfering. Marriage by gift was binding, all the more so if the woman were a slave or a prisoner of war. She would not become Conops' slave because he might not sell her; she would be bound to him for life, promoted or reduced to his rank—considering it promotion or reduction as she pleased—in theory free, in practise a sailor's drudge.

Conops was as much alarmed as she was.

"Master!" he exploded. "What use is she on a ship? Why, she can't even cook! She's——"

"Peace, you drunken, blabbing fool! When I give you a wife, you'll take her and be grateful, or I'll break your head! Think yourself lucky to——"

But she who had been Cæsar's light o' love could not face life with Conops.

"I will tell, Tros!" she said, and sat down on the chair again, shuddering. "You will not give me to that one-eyed thing?"

Tros nodded, grunted. He hated to bargain with her, but on the other hand it would have gone against the grain to ruin Conops by imposing such a wife on him.

"What Cæsar wrote to you, Tros, it was meant that the lord Caswallon should read. It was supposed that some one, some druid, would know Latin and translate it to him. But the lord burned the letter."

"What did Cæsar write?" Tros thundered at her. "And why in Latin?"

"He wrote, Lord Tros, that he trusted you, as agreed between you and him at Seine-mouth, to stir up the Britons against the lord Caswallon; in return for which he promised, as agreed, to confer high command on you so soon as sufficient Britons should recognize the advantage of welcoming the Roman legions into Britain. He concluded by reminding you of your pledge that there shall be no opposition to his landing on the coast of Britain when he comes again. And he charged you, to that end, to support the lord Caswallon's enemies.

Tros stroked his beard and pecked with his sword-point at the floor-boards.

"Why did he write those lies?" he demanded.

But he knew why. He knew she was telling the truth. He knew Cæsar's methods.

She recovered a trace of her former impudence.

"Who am I, to know Cæsar's mind?" she answered, and Tros recognized something else that she was ready to betray any one for her own advantage. He clutched Conops' arm and pulled him forward.

"Answer me in full, or——"

"Cæsar hoped that any of several things might happen. The lord Caswallon might kill you, which would be payment for your impertinence at Seine-mouth. Or the lord Caswallon might mistrust you and put you to flight, when you might fall into Cæsar's hands and be crucified.

"Or, learning of the lord Caswallon's mistrust, you might turn against him in self-defense and, joining his enemies, start rebellion against him, setting Briton against Briton, which would make invasion simpler. Or, you might be sensible and, accepting magnanimous forgiveness, take command of Cæsar's fleet, making use of your great knowledge of the British coast to forward an invasion."

"Or——?"

Tros knew there was something left unsaid. He jabbed his sword into the floor, pulled back the hilt and let it go until it hummed. She understood him. She must speak before the humming ceased.

"Tros, I am trained. I sing and dance. Some men are easily tempted. Cæsar thought——"

"Continue! What did Cæsar think?"

"I am not sure I know what he thought."

"Then I will tell you! Cæsar thought I might be fool enough to accept his promise from your lips! I might be fool enough to turn against Caswallon, might be fool enough to captain Cæsar's fleet a while, fool enough to come within his reach and serve him, until usefulness was spent and he could pick another quarrel, crucify me at his leisure. You were to beguile me and betray me to him at the proper time!"

"Lord Tros, I could not have done it! I could not betray a man like you! I was Cæsar's slave. Now I am yours. I would rather be yours. You are not wicked, as Cæsar is! Lord Tros, I will be your faithful slave. I will betray Cæsar to you! Only no degradation! I am not a common slave."

"I pity you!" Tros answered. "Pity shall make no fool of me nor a successful rogue of

you! Answer my other question: Why did Cæsar write in Latin and not Gaulish? He knew the lord Caswallon knows no Latin."

"Ah! But if the letter were in Gaulish, the lord Caswallon might have been sharp enough to understand it was a trick to turn him against you."

Tros laughed in spite of weariness and anger, sheathing his sword.

"Who sups with Cæsar needs a long spoon!"

She tried to take advantage of his changed mood, gazing at him with dark, lustrous eyes that verged on tears.

"Lord Tros, you said you pity me. Do pity me! I was free-born. Romans destroyed our city when I was a young child. I was sold and they took me to Rome. Do you know what that means? To save myself from the worst that can befall a woman I strove to become so valuable that for their own sakes they would not throw me on the market.

"A dealer had bought me; he had me taught to dance and sing; he began to make use of me to entertain his customers; and so I learned intrigue.

"Once, when Cæsar was in Rome, I was sent to coax him to buy man-slaves. I entertained him, and he bought, at above the market rate for such cattle as I offered. Then, thinking better of it, he returned those man-slaves to the dealer and kept me, at the price of three of them.

"And since then he has used me for his purposes, bringing me to Gaul because I knew my mother-tongue. Lord Tros, 'like master like slave!' I have had to be wicked, because Cæsar is! Lord Tros, I will serve you as I never served Cæsar!"

She glanced at Helma, smiled with such meekness and such lustrous eyes that Helma was stirred to sympathy and rose from the bench, though Sigurdsen's wife whispered and restrained her.

"She is yours, too. Lord Tros, let me serve her!"

Helma shuddered. She had not expected that. She shook her head. But Tros was in a quandary and given to strange, masterful impulses when in that mood.

"You have joined your destiny to mine," he said to Helma. "You shall do your part. Take charge of her, keep her until Caswallon comes."

Helma protested in a flutter of mistrust. She whispered to the other women, then seizing Tros' arm, begged him to be more cautious.

"She will betray us all! Let Britons guard her!"

But Tros knew jealousy when he saw it. He laughed.

"I have given you your task," he answered.

"Then at least a guard of Northmen!"

"Zeus!" he exploded. But Helma saw the laughter in his eyes. "Are Northmen deaf? And you dumb? If they are my men, shall they not obey you?"

She dropped her eyes, apologizing, pleased.

"So be it. All, save Sigurdsen," she answered.

But when she looked up it was at Conops. She knew well enough she could manage Sigurdsen.

"Heh? What was that? Who disobeys you deals with me!" Tros answered.

He, too, suddenly faced Conops.

"You! You see that woman? Helma her name is. She is my bride. You obey her, save and except only when her orders clash with mine!"

Conops blinked. Helma smiled at him.

"*Oimoi!* We were master and man. Now we are three and —— take us!" Conops murmured.

For which impertinence Tros took him by the ear and cuffed him, but not hard enough to hurt.

Over Helma there crept a new, visible sense of possession. Nothing that Tros could have said or done could have made as much impression as that speech. She had come into her own; she was his mate, his partner!

Strangers they might be, with almost all to learn about each other, but Tros had laid a rock of confidence in place, on which to build the future, and her eyes glowed gratitude.

CHAPTER IX

TROS STRIKES A BARGAIN

TROS slept until Caswallon came, full pelt, with a yell to the guard at the gate, reining in foaming stallions with their fore-feet over the porch and leaping along the pole between them into the house, Fflur following a moment later. The chief and Orwic were conferring when Tros rose sleepily and bulked through the leather

curtains that divided inner-room from hall. Caswallon eyed him swiftly, searchingly, then smiled and strode to meet him.

"Brother Tros!" he said, embracing in the British fashion, one cheek then the other, each man's right hand patting the other's back.

Caswallon was as swift of resolution and as emotional as a boy beneath that rather noncommittal surface. His mustache hid lips that gave the lie to the high cheek-bones; he was gentler than he seemed, although a mighty man in battle and stronger than his two strongest men-at-arms.

He thrust the pawing dogs away, pretending anger, and took Fflur's hand, she watching Tros as if she could read thoughts before he formed them. Three children came and clung to Fflur, but she hardly noticed them, although they laughed at her because her hair was all blown from the chariot ride and she was mud-bespattered from Caswallon's trick of driving through and over anything he met.

"What is this about the Gaulish woman?" Caswallon asked, when he had waited for Tros to speak and Tros said nothing.

"She was Cæsar's slave," Tros answered. "She was not entitled to be anybody's guest. Cæsar insulted you, me, all of us, every Briton of the Trinobantes, when he sent a *slave* to intrigue among us as an equal!"

"So!" said Caswallon, and tugged his mustache.

He glanced at Fflur, but she looked away and gave him no counsel.

"A slave, eh? Do you know that?"

Tros laughed.

"I will sell her to you, if you wish! She is mine, since Cæsar sent her to beguile me! I will write you a bill of sale for her and sign it with Cæsar's name and seal. To make it full and binding I will wear his cloak that I took with his seal and treasure-chest! Do you want her?"

He was watching Fflur sidewise, considering the drama that her eyes revealed. Suddenly he caught her full gaze and she nodded; they understood each other.

"If you are my friend, Tros," said Fflur in her quiet voice, "you will keep that woman from Caswallon!"

"What is to be done with her?" asked Tros.

But instead of answering, Caswallon let go Fflur's hand and strode a dozen paces up the hall and back again.

"Tros!" he said at last. "She was swift, she was swifter than death! She came by night in a chariot, with a tale of shipwreck and the friendship of the men of Hythe. She said nothing of Skell. By morning she had won half Lunden! She came to visit me with more than thirty young bloods fawning on her! She showed me Cæsar's letter, and she spoke of you.

"In an hour, nay, in less than an hour, she had offered to betray both you and Cæsar. She gave me that letter, and I burned it. It was Latin, and besides, you had been my friend. I did not choose to let my eyes see proof against you. Then—we were alone then—she spoke to me of you and Fflur."

"He believed it!" Fflur interrupted. There was almost hatred in her eyes. "He took that woman's word that I, the mother of his sons, was——"

"Fflur!" Caswallon did his best to smile, but the ire in her gray eyes chilled him. "You heard what the druid said. Did he not say an evil woman can corrupt the strongest man in a little while? Did the druid not say I was no more to be blamed than if I took a wound in battle? Have I not begged your forgiveness until my tongue stuttered against my teeth for lack of words?"

"Yes, words!" Fflur answered. "But you turned that woman loose to make worse mischief. You let her go and live with——"

"Should I have kept her in my house?" Caswallon almost yelled at her.

"No!" said Fflur.

"Should I have killed her? What would the druids have said to that? What would half Britain have said that is forever urging me to listen to Cæsar's terms! Lud knows, it's hard enough to rule, without new excuses for dissension! I had to say I would take time for thought. And before I could think, those Northmen came plundering the river-villages."

Tros tried to pour oil on the waves of argument.

"The question is, what shall be done with her."

"That which should have first been done with her!" Fflur answered. "Send her back to Cæsar with a whipping, in a dress turned inside out and a whip in her hand as a gift to Cæsar! Bid her tell him that is Fflur's reply to Rome!"

Caswallon shrugged his shoulders hopelessly. His blundering, good-natured, gentlemanly sense of statecraft pulled him one way, his affection for his wife another.

"Fflur is forever positive," he grumbled, taking Tros by the shoulder. "But what would you do? Half my kingdom favors listening to Cæsar. Shall I ride it over them?"

Tros threw his hands behind him, legs apart, as if he stood deciding issues on his own poop.

"Let us hear Fflur. What says Fflur?" he answered.

"Lud! I have been hearing Fflur since——"

Fflur interrupted. She went to Caswallon's side and held his hand, then burst into speech as if a ten-day dam were down, word galloping on word with sobs between:

"He is the best king Britain ever had! Bravest of them all! Generous—too just to every one except himself! They take advantage. Kindness is weakness in a king. He should rule, and he won't! I told him when to kill Skell, but he did not even hunt him out of Britain! Now Skell is back again. They say Caswallon's friends are hunting him. Orwic bade them——"

"I thought of that!" said Tros.

"Yes, but it is your fault Skell is living, Tros—yours! You should have killed him when you had the chance! What kind of friend do you call yourself, if you can't slay Caswallon's enemies! Now Orwic says Skell has escaped them. Do you know what that means?"

She paused for breath; mastered a sob-shaken voice, and forced herself to speak with the slow, measured emphasis of tragedy:

"Skell will go—has gone to Black Glendwyr's place. Glendwyr craves Caswallon's shoes! Glendwyr leads the cowards who would live by Cæsar's leave! Skell will urge Glendwyr to revolt! He will speak of that Gaulish woman; he will lie about her; he will magnify her rank; he will tempt Glendwyr to win Cæsar's good will by befriending her and overthrowing you!"

She almost struck her husband, she was so bent on compelling him to understand his danger.

"Glendwyr will say you let the Northmen burn three villages. He will say you sent Tros against Cæsar, to irritate him when you should have sought peace. Father of my sons, Glendwyr will be in arms by tomorrow, with all the malcontents! I know it! I know it!"

"Pray Lud he is!" Caswallon answered.

"What have you done to be ready for him?" Fflur retorted. "Glendwyr has been brewing treason all these months! Did he help us against Cæsar on the beach? Not he! He saved his men to use them against you! Who helped this woman to reach Lunden with such speed? Skell? Whence should Skell get relays of swift horses? I tell you, Glendwyr did it!"

"How do you know that?" Caswallon asked, frowning.

"A druid said so."

"Lud rot the druids! They carry tales like kitchen-wenches!"

"The same druid told me that the woman came to Lunden in Glendwyr's chariot," Fflur went on, tight-lipped with anger, her eyes blazing.

"Why didn't you tell me that before?"

"I did. You didn't listen. You were in love with her dark eyes! You said no woman should be refused a hearing and you refused to hear me!"

"Mother of my sons, Lud knows my ears are full of your rebukes!" Caswallon answered, comically sorry for himself. "Peace, will you! Silence! Let us hear Orwic."

Orwic looked bored and smiled wanly, as usual when there was reason to be deadly serious, stroking his mustache as if good grooming were nine points of any problem.

"They've looted Skell's house. I think they'll burn it. Skell was gone, though, and they can't find him. Fifty or sixty others have gone, too. I daresay Fflur is right: They may have followed Skell to Glendwyr's place. But that needn't spoil the funeral. Glendwyr lives too far away to interrupt that."

"By Lud! He shall not interrupt it!" Caswallon exclaimed; and Fflur sighed, as if it were no use trying to make her husband recognize danger.

She turned away and left them, making for the room where Tros had installed Helma and all his Northmen with the woman from Gaul under their close surveillance.

There was presently much talk from beyond the wrinkled leather curtain, while Caswallon, Tros and Orwic stood face to face considering what next to say to one another. They three stood in silence for a long time.

Suddenly Helma came to them, blinking at the sunlight through the great door. Her combed hair hung like spun-gold to her waist, lighter and fairer than gold might be, yet not so colorless as flax.

"Marriage or funeral first?" Tros asked. "By Lud, Caswallon, I would hate to see you buried in my father's grave! Yet if I were Skell—and if this Glendwyr is the man Fflur thinks he is—there would be more buryings tonight than the druids have prepared for! Yet if you die, they must bury me too, because I like to stand with friends. I would rather leave this girl a widow than dowerless. There is kings' blood in her veins."

He laid a hand on Helma's shoulder.

"My lord Tros," she said, "you are my protector, and you have done me greater honor than befalls a many prisoners. A while ago I cried to my brother Sigurdsen to slay you on your own ship. Shall I speak now, or be silent?"

"Speak," said Tros, half-bowing to Caswallon for permission.

"She of Gaul—Cæsar's woman," Helma began, and Caswallon swore under his breath; he was sick of that, subject. But Tros pricked his ears.

"She combed my hair, swearing she would serve me, speaking presently of Cæsar, and of you, most highly praising you by inference, contrasting you with Cæsar. So, a little at a time, she found out that I know little concerning the lord Caswallon; and that if I must choose, I should follow you, refusing to acknowledge him. Thereafter for a long time she was silent, while she dressed my hair.

"When she began to speak again she asked about those of my people whom the lord Caswallon had made prisoners in the fighting in the woods. She knows they are now in a great barn near the stables within the wall that surrounds this house. I think she overheard the command to bring them here.

"She said she supposed I could influence them, and for a while after that she talked of a dozen things—mainly of Gaul and the fate of Cæsar's prisoners.

"Then, when she had done my hair, she sat at my feet making a great show of humility, and cried a little, and then exclaimed how much better destiny had treated me than her, me, who am to be a great sea-captain's wife, and she but a slave.

"But after a while she held my hand, studying the lines across the palm, saying darkly I should feel the contrast if the noble Tros were slain before what I hoped should happen.

"So I questioned her, pretending credence in her art of reading what is written in lines on the palm of the hand, although I know such stuff is witchcraft, and a lie invented to entrap fools. Presently, having made much talk of voyages, and money, and—I think she said—five sons, she grew excited and very earnest, saying there was a grave disaster impending, that I might prevent if I were wise enough. And she said there was wisdom written on my palm, but too much overlaid with other lines that signify a willingness to submit to whatever fate may inflict.

"She was very full of guile. It was little by little, holding my hand and forever pretending to read it, that she hinted and then spoke more plainly, and then urged. She said it was written in my hand—mine!—that a revolt is coming, and that you, her protector she called you, would be slain unless I bade the Northmen seize you and carry you to safety elsewhere.

"I questioning, she seemed to go into a trance. She stared at the wall, her body rigid and her breath in gasps. She spoke then of men who will revolt against the lord Caswallon, intending to slay him and set another in his place. She said my destiny, and yours, and hers lay with the new man; but she did not name him.

"She spoke of tonight's funeral. She said she could see me left in this house with the Northmen and a very small guard of Britons. She said she could see me leading away the Northmen through the woods, guided by her and a Briton, toward men who made ready to attack the lord Caswallon.

"She said she saw the funeral, and you beside the lord Caswallon. Men seized you, she said, because she and I insisted, and they bore you off to safety in the woods. But the lord Caswallon, and the rest, she said they slew.

"Then she came out of the trance and asked me what she had been saying. She said she never can remember afterwards what passed her lips when those strange spells possess her. So I told her what she had said, and she seemed to grow afraid, asserting that a god had spoken through her.

"Then she urged me to be guided by the voice of her trance, saying she understood now what it all meant, how a certain lord Glendwyr, who had lent her chariot and horses to reach Lunden, would attack the lord Caswallon and himself become king.

"She said, 'Let us plan so that *all* the Northmen in a band together shall seize the lord Tros and convey him to safety, since neither you, nor he, nor I, nor the Northmen owe the lord Caswallon anything, but the lord Glendwyr will be glad to have us with him.' "

Tros and Caswallon met each other's eyes.

"How long have you known this Northwoman of yours?" Caswallon asked.

"We have all lived many lives and destiny plays with us like pieces on the board," Tros answered. "I know the truth when I hear it."

He drew Helma closer to him in the hollow of his left arm.

"Truth when a woman speaks?" Caswallon answered. "*Phagh!* I grow sick of these cross-purposes! This is but a trick again. Northmen are all liars! This is a plan to gather all the Northmen in one place. They would gain my confidence, then break for liberty. Cæsar's woman has had no time to learn Glendwyr's plans, suppose he has any. And who would trust Glendwyr against me? Not more men than I can snap my fingers at."

He snapped his fingers, then flexed his muscles and threw his shoulders back.

"Give me one good excuse to burn Glendwyr's roost!" he exclaimed.

But Tros grinned. It was an aggravating grin, as he intended that it should be.

"I have heard you say, 'Fflur is always right!' " he answered. "Cæsar's woman has had five days. Cæsar, himself swifter than the wind to snatch advantage, doubtless picked her for her swiftness. Zeus! Have you and I not seen how swift she is! And it may be that Cæsar knew beforehand of Glendwyr's plans.

"Cæsar has spies, and there are Britons who trade back and forth with Gaul, as for instance the Atrebates, who are not your friends, Caswallon. Why, they tell me that half of the Atrebates live in Gaul.

"Would it be wonderful if Cæsar should have learned about dissension in your realm? Rome's very life is staked on other folks' dissensions! So is Cæsar's! A dead dog smells the same whichever way the wind blows! If he can keep Rome by the ears, faction against faction, for his own advantage, will he not do it here?"



CASWALLON turned and paced the hall a time or two, the blue-veined skin of his face and neck looking deathly white against the hangings. He chewed his mustache; his fingers worked behind his back as if he were kneading the dough of indecision. Tros let go of Helma, almost pushed her from him.

"Cast up the reckoning!" he said. "Let us strike one woman off against the other, trusting neither. But a third remains, How often have you told me, 'Fflur is always right!' I say, take Fflur's word for it. and look sharply to Glendwyr!"

Caswallon stood still, mid-length of the hall.

"It would suit me well to fight him!" he said.

And he looked the part.

"Then fight him now!" Tros answered. "Glendwyr thinks tonight's obsequies will hold you occupied. Is he mad enough to spare you while your back is turned? To me it looks simple enough."

Caswallon came and stood in front of him, arms folded on his breast.

"Simple?" he said. "How long have you known Britain? Twenty years now I have kinged it, and I—I don't know my Britons yet!"

"If I should stand in your shoes, I would teach them to know me!" Tros retorted. "*Bah!* It is as simple as a mutiny at sea! Pick out the ringleader and smash him! Thus, then Cæsar's woman! Fill her ears! Let her learn by listening when she thinks none watches her, that you and every man you trust will attend the obsequies tonight, leaving this town unguarded.

"I will urge you, in her hearing, to guard the town well; you poohpooh it, laughing at me, and bid Orwic gather all your men for the procession. Then help her to escape or let Fflur dismiss her in a fury. Let Fflur give her a chariot and send her to the coast to make her own way back to Cæsar.

"Trust Fflur to put sufficient sting in it to make that plausible! The woman will go to Glendwyr; she will hurry to tell him Lunden is undefended! Good. You postpone the obsequies. You march! You catch Glendwyr unready in the nervous hour between preparation and the casting

of the dice! You smite him in the night! Hang him! Hang Skell! Hang the Gaulish woman!

"Pack the three into a box and send it with your compliments to Cæsar! It will smell good by the time it reaches him! Then ride your bit of Britain with a rough hand, drilling, storing arrows, making ready! For Cæsar will invade again, Caswallon, as surely as you and I and Orwic stand here!"

"Clever! But you don't know Britain," Caswallon answered. "I am a king, but the druids say their Mysteries are more than kingdoms, even as a man's life is but a spark in the night of eternity.

"They have lighted the fires. They have informed the gods. They have found the right conjunction of the stars and set their altars accordingly. What the druids do, let no man interrupt."

"Lud rot the druids!" Orwic muttered.

But he was of a generation younger, that was more impatient with eternity.

"How many men has Glendwyr?" Tros asked.

"Maybe a hundred! Nor will he have more unless he can score an advantage. If I have hard work raising a handful to fight Northmen, what hope has he of raising an army? They might flock to him if he should win a battle, but not otherwise."

"And how many have you?" Tros asked.

"Maybe a hundred. I raised three hundred against the Northmen; but some were killed, some hurt and some have gone home. There will be a thousand in to-night's procession, and as many women, but nine-tenths would run.

"Britons are brave enough, but they say, 'A king should king it!' They leave their king to king it when the trouble starts. However, Glendwyr would never dare to interrupt the druids."

"Have you not watched Glendwyr? Have you no spies?" Tros asked.

"Yes. But my men go home to the feasting when a fight is over, whether they win or lose it! Glendwyr's men are feasting, too, I will stake my kingdom on it."

"I have seen kingdoms staked, and lost ere now!" said Tros.

Caswallon's indifference puzzled him. He suspected the chief of knowing more than he pretended, and yet, the almost stupid, bored look might be genuine. Orwic looked as bored and careless as Caswallon did.

Tros, both hands behind him, legs apart, considered how he might earn fair profit that should leave him free of obligation to the man who paid.

"I have a bride, a longship and a crew of thirteen men. I need more men," he remarked.

"Lud love me, I can spare none!" said Caswallon.

"You have three-and-twenty Northmen prisoners," said Tros, "and they once belonged to my man Sigurdsen. They are no good to you for ransom. They are seamen. They can build ships. I can use them. If Glendwyr should attack Lunden while your back is turned——"

Caswallon smiled, a little grimly, but said —nothing.

"—— they would naturally help Glendwyr if he turned them loose. But I have Sigurdsen, their former chief. And I have Helma, whom they love. If I should promise them their freedom under me, they would fight at my bidding. Will you give them to me, if I guard you tonight while your back is turned?"

Caswallon stared hard. "Will you not attend your father's obsequies?" he asked.

"That I would dearly love to do," said Tros, "but you are my friend. I think you are in danger. I would rather strike a hard blow for a living man than shed tears following a dead one to the grave. Give me the Northmen!"

"What will you do with them?" Caswallon asked.

"I will guard your back tonight."

"You mean, you will dare to hold Lunden Town for me with six-and-thirty men?" Caswallon asked.

He hid his mouth behind his hand as he watched Tros' eyes, and once, for about a second, he glanced at Orwic.

"Aye," Tros answered. "I am no fair-weather friend. As for my father, if he could come from the dead, he would bid me attend to the task of living and leave comfortably dead men to the druids!"

"You are mad, Tros!" said Caswallon. "But I like you, though I did doubt you a while back. You are a fool; Northmen are poor laborers on land. I will give you instead as much land as you can stride the length of on your own feet from dawn to sunset. With Cæsar's gold you can buy mares and cattle. I will give you the gray stallion I bought a month ago from the

Iceni. Helma to wife and a holding in Britain, what more do you want?"

"Freedom! A ship and the sea!" Tros answered. "Nay, no bondage to the dirt! Will you give me the Northmen?"

"They are yours," Caswallon answered. "But you are more mad than a hare in the furrows in spring!"

Nevertheless, he nodded at Orwic as if Tros' bargain suited him, and Orwic smiled behind a hand that stroked his long mustache.

CHAPTER X

RASH? WISE? DESPERATE? OR ALL THREE?

THERE was a deal of talk still, interrupted by men who came in to ask about the night's procession, and by the servants who set up the long table in the hall, putting benches in place and silver plates for folk of high degree, wooden ones for ordinary mortals. Britains never moved, whether for war or peace, until they had gorged enormously.

"A poor enough wedding feast!" Caswallon said. "I would rather you waited, Tros, until——"

Tros interrupted him with one of his deep-sea laughs that rose from somewhere near his middle where the sword hung:

"Until Glendwyr runs me through, and you give Helma to a man who loves horses and pigs? Nay, Caswallon, you shall marry me this day! Then if I die, Helma will be dowered with money and ship, so she may choose, and not be chosen!"

He swaggered with his deep-sea captain's gait toward the long room at the rear where all his Northmen lay glooming, their eyes on Cæsar's woman, who sat between Sigurdsen's wife and the widow.

Sigurdsen rose to his feet as Tros entered; he looked as if recovering from too much mead; his eyes were red; his knees shook; a northern gloom possessed him such as grays a winter's sea; but he met Tros' eyes as faith to faith, without emotion.

He would have spoken, but Tros checked him with one of those gestures of confidence that convey more than a hundred words. Sigurdsen sat down again among his men, his back toward a leather-curtained wall.

Tros smiled at Cæsar's woman. She smiled back, remaining seated. She did not glance at Helma, who had followed Tros into the room, but she let Tros see that she understood Helma had told of the palm-reading and the trance. Her liquid eyes were more intelligent than lovely—too alert, too knowing.

Tros out-acted her. Over his bold face there swept such visible emotions as a man might feel who found himself mistaken, who had doubted, to discover that his doubt was wrong, who envied brains more subtle than his own, who held the upper hand, yet felt a diffidence in using it, because he must seek favors of his victim.

There was vague regret depicted, and a little laughter at the ebb and flow of destiny; a gift of guile that could admire guile, the expression of a clever gambler, losing, who will pay the bet.

"If you stay, Fflur will tear you to pieces!" he said, grinning, stroking his chin, letting the black beard straggle through his fingers.

"I am your slave," she answered.

She laid chin on hands, both elbows on her knees, to watch his face.

He nodded.

"Careless kings are weak friends," he said darkly. "Caswallon cares nothing about you. Fflur will not endure you. You may go. I will send you to Glendwyr's place. Tell Glendwyr I would have come with you, but I attend my father's obsequies. Say, if he takes Lunden before dawn, I will befriend him with six-and-thirty Northmen."

"Noble Tros," she answered, "I will tell Glendwyr how many men guard Lunden, if you inform me."

"None!" said Tros, almost whispering.

She stared. He nodded, one arm across his chest, resting the other elbow on it, chin on hand.

"Tell Glendwyr I arranged that. I pay for service rendered, handsomely. You understand me?"

"Noble Tros, I am your slave! You shall be king of Britain and Cæsar's friend, if you will trust me!"

"I judge words by performances," Tros answered. "Come!"

He led her to the stable-yard, where Orwic had a chariot for her yoked and waiting.

"How far to Glendwyr's place?" he asked her, as if that were an afterthought.

"Four or five hours," she answered. "But Glendwyr waits only three hours' ride away, or it may be less. I know the place. His charioteer, who brought me, showed me where the road turns off by a stream in the forest."

"Go fast!" said Tros. "Bid Glendwyr hasten! Say, if he fails this night, I will never again trust him. And you likewise! Fail me, and you will find Cæsar a more forgiving man than me! Serve me, and I am more generous than Cæsar!"

Orwic opened a side gate, standing behind it, so that she did not catch sight of him, although her appraising eyes swept every corner of the yard, and Tros was sure she knew the count of chariots that stood pole-upward, the number of restless horses in the long sheds, and how many serfs played knuckle-bones under the eaves.

Those eyes of hers missed nothing, except that Tros laughed when her chariot went plunging through the gate, and that it was Orwic, Caswallon's nephew and his right-hand-man, who slammed the gate shut behind her.

"A mare's nest!" said Orwic, rather melancholy. "There will be no eggs in it! I know Glendwyr; bold when it pays to lie low, coward at smiting time! If he had come to fight the Northmen, yes, he might have won a following against Caswallon afterward.

"But he lay low then, and he will lie low now, until Caswallon has an army at his back. Then the fool will have at us—Lud help him! He shall lie low then for all time!"

Tros' amber eyes glanced at the sky.

"Northeast wind backing to the north!" he answered; but what he meant by that he did not say, any more than he knew what Orwic's air of information in reserve might mean.

He returned to where Helma waited whispering to Sigurdsen. The Northman looked at Tros with new appraisal in his eyes, and actually smiled at last.

"Can he fight?" Tros asked. "Is he fit for an adventure?"

Sigurdsen nodded and talked back to Helma in a singsong growl that sounded like the sea on jasper beaches, but Tros did not wait for all that outburst to be interpreted; when Helma turned to speak he took her by the shoulders and, in short, hurried phrases told her of the plan in mind.

So she told Sigurdsen, and he, laughing, told the others, bidding one of them help him strip off all the bandages that impeded his arms and his huge shoulder-muscles.

Tros led the way then toward the yard, but Conops met him in the door, gesturing secrecy, mysterious as if he came from snooping in a graveyard.

"Master! One word!"

"Aye! And I will count the word! Be swift!"

Conops drew him back into the room and whispered:

"Master! Women are no good! I know! I never dallied with a woman but she robbed me! That one you have sent away would sell her lover to a press-gang for the price of a drop of scent! This one, this yellow-haired young one will scold you, day in, day out! When she is older she will be like Fflur, who scolds Caswallon until he daren't even drink without her leave, and drinks because she worries him! Master, don't marry her! Don't! Don't! And your father not yet in his grave!"

Tros took him by the neck, laughed, shook him until his teeth clattered like castanets.

"Stand by!" he said. "Stand by! You hear me? Stand by for dirty weather, if you smell the wind! If she should scold me, I will take it out on your hide, little man, you little one-eyed, split-lipped, red-haired, freckled, dissolute, ugly, faithful friend o' mine! Belay advice!

"Out oars, you knife-nasty, wharf-running, loyal old dirty-weather sea-dog! Stow that tongue and stand by me as I endure you, dock-rat, drunkard, shame of the Levant, impertinent, devoted trusty that you are! No back-talk, or I'll break your head! I'll buy a wife for you, and make you keep her! Now, are you satisfied?"



TROS banged his head against the wall by way of clinching argument and strode at the head of his Northmen to the stable-yard, they tramping in his wake like henchmen who had served him since the day they carried arms, with Conops fussing along behind them ragging Sigurdsen because he did not keep step.

But Sigurdsen was too proud to fall into the rhythm of the tramp, and rather too long-legged; also, he was not at all disposed to do what Conops told him, or even to take notice of him, or to admit that he understood.

When they reached the great barn where Caswallon's Northmen were confined, Orwic was waiting and unlocked the complicated wooden contrivance that held the

beam in place across the double door. There was no armed guard; the prisoners knew they were safer there than if at liberty until the rage against them should die and Britons resume their usual easy-going tolerance of friend and former foe alike. They were lying in straw, their wounded wrapped in clean white linen.

Those who could rise were on their feet the moment Sigurdsen stood bulked against the light; there were only two who lay still, although a dozen of them had to struggle from the straw, being stiff from painful wounds.

But there was none hurt beyond fairly swift recovery, or he would have been "finished" where he lay on the battlefield as unfit for slavery, half-slavery of service to a British chief, or ransom.

Tros, with Helma next to him, stood one side of the long barn where the failing sunlight pouring through the door shone on their faces. Sigurdsen, his Northmen at his back, stood facing Tros; and there began such rhetoric as Tros had never heard.

For Sigurdsen's fever had left him and left his brain clear. A beaten chief, hopeless of ransom, Tros had given him far better terms than even over-generous Caswallon would have dared to give.

The Britons would have put him to hard labor for a year or two, a dismal execution overhanging him if he should fail to please; thereafter, little by little, they might have let him rise from serfdom to a holding of his own, half-subject to one of the numerous minor chiefs.

But Tros had offered him a free man's post of honor, second-in-command to Tros himself, and great adventure on the unknown seas.

So Sigurdsen waxed eloquent. The rhythm of the northern sagas rang among the barn-beams as his throat rolled out in Norse a challenge to defeated men to rally to a new prince, Tros of Samothrace, sea-captain without equal, loved of Thor and Odin, brave and cunning, Tros who stood before them, Tros who had claimed the fair-haired Helma, daughter of a hundred kings, to be his bride!

There seemed no stopping him now that he had broken his long silence. He recited Helma's pedigree, commencing in the dim gray dawn of time with mythical half-deities and battles between gods and men. He made the roof-beams ring to the names of heroes and fair-haired heroines whose record seemed to consist exclusively of battlefield betrothals, glittering wedding feasts and death on fields of honor.

He chanted of a golden age when his ancestors were kings, it seemed, of half a universe, with wisemen to support them and defeat the magic of the witches and trolls who counseled enemies, whose only purpose in existence was, apparently, to act as ninepins for heroes to knock down.

And presently he sang of Tros. His measured, rhythmic prose grew into singsong as imagination seized him, until almost one could hear the harp-strings picking out the tune. He had no facts to hamper him, except the all-important one that Tros had conquered him in single fight and, recognizing a descendant from the gods, had pledged with him faith forever on an oaken poop, "a sea-swept poop, a poop of a proud ship, mistress of the gales, a strong ship, a long-ship, a ship that Tros, a mighty man in battle, saw and seized—he, single-handed, slaying fifty men!"

He made a pedigree for Tros. He chanted of his black beard and his amber eyes, that were the gift of Odin treasured through endless centuries by high-born women who were born into the world to mate with offspring of a hundred gods. He sang of seas that roared in cataracts across the far rim of the world, where Tros had met strange fleets and smitten them to ruin, "and the bare bones of the foemen strew the beaches; and the rotting timbers of the wrecks lie broken on the sand!"

He crowded half a century of fighting into Tros' short life, described his father as a "king of kings" who died in battle against fifty thousand men, and ended with a prophecy that Tros would found a kingdom in which kings and queens should be his vassals, dukes and earls his serving men, and "amber the stuff his cups are made of, platters of gold to eat from."

A hundred sons and grandsons, men of valor, should comb the earth in rivalry of manhood to deserve the privilege of wearing Tros' sword when, "ripe in years and splendor," he should go at last "to where the gods and all his ancestors make merry amid feasting in Valhalla!"

Tros did not understand a word of it, but Helma told him as much as she could remember of it afterward, when they had all done roaring "Hail!" to him and the charioteers and stable-men crowded in the doorway—first with a notion that trouble was

brewing and then, because Orwic appeared well pleased, adding their own shouts to the tumult.

All the Northmen kissed Helma and did fealty to Tros, each touching the hilt of his long sword and murmuring hoarse words that sounded like an echo of a longship launching off the ways. There was a roll of thunder in it, and the names of Thor and Odin.



HELMA smiled through tears, a gleam of grandeur on her face. But she was serious when she repeated to Tros what Sigurdsen had sung, she walking hand-in-hand with him toward Caswallon's hall, with the Northmen tramping in the rear supporting the wounded between them.

It did not appear to occur to her that there might be any untruth in Tros' pedigree as Sigurdsen unfolded it, or that there might be anything far-fetched in the account of Tros' wanderings and battles at the far rim of the world. That he was not so old as Sigurdsen and could not possibly have done a hundredth part of all that Sigurdsen ascribed to him, meant nothing to her.

She was proud of her new lord beyond the limit of expression, far beyond the commonplace dimensions of such tawdry facts as time and space. She walked beside him worshiping, her young, strong, virgin heart aglow with such emotion as no years can limit.

"Lord Tros," she said. Her voice thrilled. There was vision in her eyes. "My brother saw beyond the veil of things. The gods sang through his mouth. It is honor and joy to me beyond words that I will bear your sons."

Whereat Tros went searching in his mind for words such as he had never used to man or woman, marveling how lame a thing is language and how a tongue, not given to too much silence, can so hesitate between one sentence and another, falling between both into a stammering confusion. So that he felt ashamed.

"Whether I be this or that, and a strong man or a weak one, I will do that which is in me, so that you be not sorry if my best may make you glad," he said at last.

And he took comfort from the speech, although it irked him to be picking and choosing, yet to find no proper words. And he did not think of his father at all, although he was conscious that he did not think of him—which would have puzzled him still more if he had pondered it.

The sun went down and servants lighted the oil-fed wicks in long bronze sconces on the wall when they all came to Caswallon's table and the noisy men-at-arms filed in—Caswallon's relatives by blood or marriage, most of them—heaping their arms in the racks in the vestibule and quarreling among themselves for right of place at table.

Some of them had wives who sat each beside her husband, because Fflur was at table, beside Caswallon's great gilded throne-chair that had been pulled forward from under the balcony. Unmarried women served the food, receiving it from serfs at the kitchen door.

Tros sat next to Fflur, with Helma on his right; beyond her, Sigurdsen, his wife and all the Northmen faced curiously amiable Britons, who seemed to think it a good joke to be eating and drinking on equal terms with men whom they had beaten in battle recently. Conops stood behind Tros, selecting the best dishes as they came and snatching them to set before his master.

First came the mead in beakers that the women carried in both hands. Caswallon struck the table with his fist for silence, then, beaker in hand, stood up and made the shortest wedding-speech that Tros—and surely Britain—had ever heard:

"Men of Lunden, we go presently to where the druids speed brave comrades, through the darkness men call death, into a life that lies beyond. And none knows what the morrow shall bring forth; so there are acts that should be done now, lest death first fall on us, like rain that shuts off a horizon. Hear ye all! This is my brother, Tros. To him I give this woman Helma to be wife, and all these Northmen, who were mine by victory, to be his faithful men-at-arms and servants. Tros!"

He raised his beaker and drank deep, up-ending it in proof there were no dregs. And when that swift ceremony was complete they all drank, except Tros and Helma, then cheered until the great hall crashed with sound. Fflur, rising, gave a golden flagon into Tros' hands, from which he and Helma drank in turn, Tros finishing the mead with one huge draught that left him gasping when he set the flagon bottom-up. Then he spoke, and was briefer than Caswallon:

"Lord Caswallon, you have named me

brother. I abide that name. At your hands I accept this woman. She is my wife. I accept these men. They shall obey me; and, whatever destiny may bring, they shall at least say they have followed one who stood beside his friends in need and kept faith whatsoever came of it!"

Then Tros took the broad gold band that he had replaced on his forehead, and by sheer strength broke it, signifying that a chapter of his life was ended.

He began the next by binding the broad gold around his bride's right arm, she staring at the symbols carved on it and wondering what gods they charged with her protection.

But there were some who murmured it was witchcraft; and a married woman cried aloud that the breaking of the golden circle was an omen of ill-luck.

Thereafter Tros had hard work to prevent his Northmen from drinking themselves useless, since the mead flowed without limit and as host Caswallon was too proud to check them.

But Tros imposed restraint by promising the widow-woman to the soberest, whereat Conops, in a panic, began drinking behind Tros' back.

And when the hurried feast was nearly at an end there came a bare-back galloper, mud-spattered, sweating, who burst into the hall and ran to Caswallon's chair, thrusting his head and shoulders between the chief and Fflur. He whispered, but Tros heard him:

"Lord! Make ready to hold Lunden! Glendwyr and two hundred men are marching! They are at the king's stone* by the Thames! They mean to make Glendwyr chief while you stand on a hillside communing with dead men's souls! All Lunden is empty! Not a light! No guard at Lud-gate! They have all gone to the druids' circle!"

"Aye. Why not?" Caswallon answered.

But he glanced at Tros.

"Lord! Stay and fight Glendwyr! He will burn your house!"

"Not he!" Caswallon laughed. "Lud rot him, he would like too well to live in it! Two hundred men, you say? Did you count them?"

"Nay, I rode! But I heard two hundred."

Caswallon laughed again.

"Maybe he rides like us to the burying."

But he glanced at Tros.

"Lord Caswallon, I have warned you. I have done my part!"

"Nay, not yet the whole of it," Caswallon answered.

And he looked a third time straight into Tros' eyes, while he wiped his mustache with a freckled, blue-veined hand.

"Take a fresh horse. Ride and find Glendwyr. Bid him meet me at the hillside where the druids wait. Say—there—when the souls of the dead have traveled their appointed path and all the fires die, I will fight him, he and I alone. It will be dawn before the fires die. Say I will fight him for my house and Lunden when dawn rises over the druids' hill."

"He will not believe me."

"Show him this," Caswallon answered; and he pulled a great gold bracelet off his wrist.

But Fflur shook her head and sighed, as if words failed her.

The man would have gone at once to ride his errand, but Tros, who had been whispering to Fflur, leaned behind her and caught the fellow's arm.

"Let him wait. Let him see us all go," he whispered, wrenching at the man's arm so that he swore aloud and struggled, not hearing what was said. "Let him first see me and my men march out with the rest."

Caswallon nodded.

"Wait," he ordered. "Ride when I tell you."



SO THE man went and sat by the fireside, drinking mead and rubbing a wrist that Tros had come near breaking.

"Caswallon, will you hear me?" Fflur asked.

"Nay, for you are always right!" he laughed, "and I know what you will say, Fflur: That the druids rule Britain, which is true enough. But you will tell me I should ride it rough over the druids, which I dare not, right though it may be you are. A druid's neck may break like any other man's, and I could butcher a herd of them, maybe, like winter's beef, but can I convince Britons I am right to do it?

"How long would they be about raising a new king to rule in place of me? The druids would choose that king, and be stronger than ever! The druids summoned you, me

*Kingston-on-Thames. The old stone in the marketplace is nowadays said to be of Saxon origin, but there is no proof it is not druidic and its true early history is obscure.

and all Lunden to the burying tonight. Obey them?

"Nay! I am the king! But I go, nevertheless, and so do you go, and all my men, and all Lunden Town, because a king's throne has four legs, of which the first is a druid; and the second is ceremony; and the third is mystery; and the fourth is common sense. But the druids did not summon Tros, nor any of his new men."

He looked hard at Tros again.

"They left that courtesy to me to undertake and, it maybe I forgot to mention it!"

He did not wait for Fflur to answer. He rose, gesturing toward the door, through which the sound of stamping stallions came and the crunch of bronze wheels on the gravel drive.

"Now, Tros," he said, "I would not leave you here unless I knew this Glendwyr business is a little matter. And I know, too, that you need a hook on which to hang your coat, as it were, if you are to winter here in Britain. I need a good excuse to lend you house and countenance in spite of jealousy and tales against you.

"So—Glendwyr is no great danger but he will serve your end. If he has fifty men, that is more than I think; and the half of those will run when the first one yells as a spear-point pricks him at Lud's Gate! Glendwyr counts on Lunden turning against me, if he can steal my house. Take care then that he never enters it! For my part, I will let the men of Lunden know you saved their town for them tonight when their backs were turned!"

Tros answered him never a word.

"Is he a rash fool, or so wise that he can laugh at rash fools, or a desperate king with druids on his neck, or all three things at once?" he wondered.

But Caswallon marched out looking like a man who understood all the rules of the game of "kinging it."

CHAPTER XI

THE BATTLE AT LUD'S GATE

TROS gathered his Northmen, the wounded and all, for they could eat and drink and walk, whatever else might ail them, and, with Helma at his side, brought up the rear of the procession behind fifty chariots that swayed in the crimson glare of torches held by men on foot.

Far away to the north-westward, beyond the forest and the marsh, there was a crimson glow against the sky, where druids' fires burned; and all the distance in between was dotted with the irregular glow of torches where the folk of Lunden and the neighboring villages formed one continuous stream.

"Zeus! Those druids have the Britons by neck and nose!" Tros muttered. "Would my father have asked burial at the risk of a man's throne? Not he! He would have ordered them to throw his body on a dung-heap, and defend themselves! If he is not too busy in another world, he will forgive me for not attending his funeral!"

The long procession filed through the circle of solemn yew-trees, where the altar was on which a daily sunrise sacrifice was laid; and there Tros halted, gathering his men around him, bidding Helma explain his plan to Sigurdsen:

"Now we march back. One has ridden to warn Caswallon's enemies that his house is empty and the town unguarded. He saw us all march away, and though that man is Caswallon's friend, the information will leak out of him like the smell of strong wine through a bottle-neck. There is none in Lunden, save the fire-guard, a few old women and, it may be, a handful of drunken fishermen down by the riverside."

"Who is the fire-guard?" Sigurdsen asked; for he knew next to nothing of Britons, except that they were not fit to be reckoned with at sea, although great fighters on horseback, and on foot in their forests.

"They," said Tros, "are about a score of old men, who sleep by day and are supposed to patrol by night. This night, instead of snoring in the watch-house, they shall serve a purpose. Conops! Go find the fire-guard. Wake them. Keep them awake. See that each cripple of them arms himself with two good torches. Hide them within Caswallon's wall, with a small fire handy at which to light the torches swiftly when I blow three blasts somewhere near the town-gate.

"When I do that, make all the noise possible and run downhill toward the gate, as if at least fifty of you were coming to my aid. If the running kills them they will die in a good cause, so spare none! No talk now! Go about your business! Hurry!"

"How much of a fight is this to be?" asked Sigurdsen. "A third of us are stiff with wounds."

He flexed his own great muscles, but it hurt him.

"Neither more nor less than any fight," Tros answered. "Tell him, Helma, that a man does what he can do, and neither gods nor men should ask more or expect less!"

He saw that nothing could be gained by telling Sigurdsen how great the danger was. The Northmen had too recently been beaten to thrill at any thought of a folorn hope. He must make them think their task was easy; so he led off, whistling to himself.

And first he returned to Caswallon's house to rifle the great racks of arms that lined a storeroom near the hall. There was no guard, no lock. He laughed as he served out bows and arrows, laughed again, as he thought of that gold he had won from Cæsar.

Fflur was supposed to be guarding it. It was probably under her bed! He wondered where Caswallon's own treasure lay, all the golden money coined in the mint at Verulam.*

"Honesty, unless all other men are honest, is no better than Achilles' heel!" he reflected. "Britons are madman. Caswallon is the maddest of them all!"

He marched his men out through Caswallon's gate slowly, because some limped and had to lean on others, and downhill between the neat, fenced houses, leaving Sigurdsen's wife and the widow-woman with orders to attach themselves to Conops' torch-brigade. But Helma he kept with him, since he had no other means of instructing his men.

They marched into a creeping gray mist ascending from the river, that made trees and houses loom like ghost-things from another world.

Except that once or twice a tied hound bayed at them and cows lowed in the barns as they went by, there was no sign of life until they reached Lud's Gate with the wooden bridge beyond it.

There was a guardhouse built of mud and timber either side the gate, but no lights and only one man fast asleep on a bench within an open guardhouse door. When Tros wakened him he said he was there to entertain belated strangers, and he pulled out a bag of roasted wheat, supposing that Tros and his men wished food and lodging for the night.

He was a very old man, trembling with the river-ague, but Tros pressed him into service since he admitted that he knew every nook and corner of the sparsely wooded land that lay beyond the bridge.

Tros decided not to close the town gate. It was ajar when he arrived, because the old man was too thoughtful of his ague to wish to struggle with it if a stranger should seek admittance. Tros flung it wide, and lighted the bronze lamps in both guardhouse windows, so that any one coming would know there was no obstruction and might elect to ride full-pelt across the bridge.

The wall reached either way into obscurity. It was a thing of mud and lumber, useless against battery, but too high for an enemy to waste time climbing if he should see a gap that he might gallop through. Beyond, were occasional clumps of trees that loomed through the drifting mist, a low gurgle from the swamps at the river-edge, and silence.

"Now," said Tros to Helma, "you shall be a widow on your bridal night, or else shall wife it with a man who stands firm in one king's favor! It seems to me the Britons are all fools, not alone Caswallon. So I think this man who comes to seize Caswallon's throne is no whit wiser than the rest. If I am wrong, then you are as good as married to a dead man! But we shall see."

He took Helma and the old guardhouse man across the bridge with him, ignored a clump of trees and undergrowth—since any fool might look for an ambush there—and, after ten minutes' stumbling over tufted ridge and muddy hollow, chose a short stretch of open country where the road crossed what apparently was level ground.

"But he noticed it was not actually level; mist and darkness were deceptive. Fifty feet away to one side the smooth, grazed turf was half a man's height higher than the road, and from that point it fell away again into a mist-filled hollow. He could have hidden a hundred men there.

He glanced at the town gate, wide, inviting. Lamplight shone across the opening, blurred by fog, and he whistled contentedly as he realized what a glare Conops' torches would make, seen from that viewpoint through the lighter mist uphill. But there was something lacking yet.

"If they come they will come in a hurry. They will charge the open gate. They will get by before we can check them!"

*Nowadays known as St. Albans.

He observed again. On his left hand, almost exactly midway between his chosen ambush and the town-gate, was the clump of trees and undergrowth that looked like such a perfect lurking place.

"Helma," he said, pointing to it, "take this old skinful of ague and hide yonder in the trees. I will give you the three worst-wounded men as well, and there is flint and tinder in the guardhouse. Mark this place in your mind. When the enemy comes abreast of me—for I will hide here along with Sigurdsen and all the others—you strike flint on steel and make a good noise in the bushes. If that does not check them, light a torch or two."

"I would liefer die beside you," Helma answered.

"You will do my bidding!" Tros retorted, and she said no word to that.



SO TROS went for his Northmen, putting the three most badly wounded, along with the old gate-house-keeper, in Helma's charge; and them he hid carefully in the clump of trees, showing them precisely between which branches to make their sparks and how to thrash the undergrowth; but as to the proper time to do that, he trusted Helma.

"Wife or widow!" he said, throwing an arm around her, laughing gruffly, for he had a long road yet to travel before he would trust the gentler side of him. "Do your part and I will do mine. So the gods will do theirs; for they like to see men and women prove themselves!"

With that he left her to her own devices and tramped away with Sigurdsen, the other Northmen following; and presently he hid them all on the shoulder of the slope above the road, where even if mounted men should spy them from the higher level of horse or chariot, their heads would look like tree-stumps in the mist. He was careful to space them at unequal intervals, not in a straight line.

But the Northmen were nervous. They had drunk too much and had been told too little; nor had they any interest in fighting, except that they would rather, for their own sakes, please Tros than offend him. It was hard to keep them quiet, although Sigurdsen went down the line whispering hoarsely, rebuking, even striking them. They complained of their wounds and the chill night air, repeatedly crowding together for warmth, protesting that the turf was damp, yet neglecting to keep their bow-strings dry.

Then a stallion neighed not far away; another answered, which sent the shivers up Tros' spine. Orwic had told him which way Glendwyr must come if he should come at all; but those stallions were somewhere behind him, whereas the road spread in front to left and right until it turned away through distant trees and followed the riverbank.

His next trouble was that the Northmen, even Sigurdsen, grew sleepy; some of them snored and he had to throw stones at them. All of them were half-asleep when he caught the sound of horsemen in the distance; and it was the sound of so many horses that he feared for one long minute his chilled, indifferent men would welcome panic and take to their heels.

But Sigurdsen sensed the panic, and stood up, swearing he would die beside Tros. Tros had to force him down again before the advance-guard of what seemed to be at least a hundred horsemen began looming through the mist. Then, to the rear again, three horses neighed; but it sounded strangely as if the neighing were half-finished, smothered. Some of the advancing horses answered it, but there was no reply.

"Zeus, we are in for it!" Tros muttered to himself. "A hundred coming—more! Another lot behind us waiting to join *them!* No quarter! Horsemen front and rear! Well, there's a laugh in everything. My Northmen have nowhere to run! Zeus! What a mad fool must Caswallon be, to leave me and this handful to defend all Lunden!"

He took a long chance, crept along the line to see that bow-strings were all taut, shaking each man as he passed, growling orders that accomplished more because the Northmen could not understand a word he said. If they had understood him they might have tried to argue.

The leading horsemen riding slowly, peering to left and right, drew nearly abreast of the ambush. One of them turned and shouted. At least a hundred in the mist along the road began cantering to catch up.

Helma heard that. Her sparks flashed and there began a crashing in the underbrush, just as the advance-guard began to spur their horses to a gallop. They saw, heard, drew rein again, began shouting to

the men behind; and in a moment there was a milling mass of men and horses, those ahead pressing back into an impatient orderless squadron that came plunging into them. A mêlée of ghosts in the mist! Somewhere away behind Tros stallions neighed again.

Shouts, yells, imprecations, argument! And into that Tros loosed his Northmen's arrow-fire! He could hear the clatter of bronze wheels and the thunder of hoofs behind him now. He knew he was between two forces, one careering from behind him to make junction with the other. He blew three bugle-blasts that split the night, and watched for Conops' torches, heard an answering bugle-blast, and saw them come pouring through Caswallon's gate, a splurge of angry crimson, whirling and spreading in the mist.

"Shoot! Shoot! Shoot into the mass!"

He seized a bow and arrows from a man who did not understand him and launched shaft after screaming shaft into the riot, where fallen horses kicked and men cursed, none sure yet whence the arrows came and each men yelling contrary advice, as some fell stricken, and some saw the torches coming downhill.

Tros' men were on their knees to take advantage of the shoulder of the rise; from in front they were hardly visible. But Sigurdsen saw the havoc they had wrought already, heard the thunder of hoofs and wheels approaching from behind, sensed climax and rose to his full height, roaring. No more bow for him! He dropped the thing and stood in full view, whirling his ax, bull-bellowing his men to charge and die down there at handgrips with the Britons!

The Northmen rallied to him in a cluster on the ridge. No more bows and arrows if they had to die; they drew swords and axes.

Tros, since he had lost control of them, took stand by Sigurdsen and sent one final shaft death-whining into the mob before trying to face his party both ways. The chariots were almost on them from behind, din of hoofs and wheels, no shouting, din deadened by the turf.

Three-score men in the road had rallied somehow, saw Northmen's heads against the skyline, spurred their panicky horses and wheeled to charge uphill. But even as they wheeled, a squadron of chariots hub-to-hub came thundering through the night on Tros' right-hand and crashed into the riot in the road, a wave of horsemen following, and then another. Before Sigurdsen could lead his men ax-swinging into that confusion, where they could never have distinguished friend from foe, the half of Glendwyr's men were in headlong flight, hard followed. It was over in sixty seconds.

Tros beat his Northmen back with the flat of his swordblade, until Helma came breathless and, clinging to Sigurdsen, screamed at them all to let the Britons fight among themselves. But nobody quite understood what had happened until Caswallon loomed out of the mist, drawing rein, resting one foot on the wooden rim above the chariot's wicker-work.

"Brother Tros," he said, "did you think I would leave you in the dark to guard my back? By Lud, no! Kinging it means trusting enemies to do their worst and watching friends lest they suffer by being friends! I told you this would be a little matter; but it was no small thing for you to prove you are my friend and not Cæsar's!"

"You came between block and knife!" said Tros, his foot on the hub of the wheel.

"Not I! Didn't you hear my stallions squeal before we silenced them? Have you seen Glendwyr?"



THE chariot-horses reared and shied, and Tros had to jump clear of the wheel before he could answer, for Conops came rushing up, torch in hand, and all the king's horses or all the king's men meant nothing to him until he knew Tros was safe.

But when he had thrust the torch close to Tros' face and made sure there were no wounds, he thought of loot and vanished in the direction where the loot might be. There was a glare of torchlight in the town gate, where his breathless veterans stood hesitating, doubtful, ready to welcome whichever side was victor.

Then a shout out of the darkness, Orwic's voice—

"We have the young Glendwyr!"

Orwic's chariot, crowded with five or six men, drew up beside Caswallon's. Three men were holding one. He struggled. But he ceased to struggle when they dragged him from the chariot and stood him close to Tros beside Caswallon's wheel. In a minute the whole party was surrounded by dismounted horsemen, whose held horses

kicked and bit while their owners clamored for young Glendwyr's death.

But Caswallon waited, tugging his mustache, until the clamor died; it was not until men hardly breathed, and they had somehow quieted the horses, that he spoke to the prisoner suddenly, and when he did speak his voice had a hammer-on-anvil note.

"You hear what these say. Where is your father?"

"Dead!"

The youngster's voice was insolent, hoarse with anger. He was possibly eighteen, but it was not easy to see his face because the mist came drifting like smoke on a faint wind and the torchlight cast fantastic shadows, distorting everything.

He had black hair that fell on to stalwart shoulders, and he stood straight, with his chin high, although two men held his arms behind him and were at no pains to do it gently.

"How did he die? When?" Caswallon asked.

The youngster answered scornfully, as if Caswallon, not he, were the accused:

"Lud's mud! You are the one who should ask that! You, who sent Cæsar's woman to him! You who sent a lying messenger to challenge him after her dagger had done its work!"

"Lud knows I would have fought him!" Caswallon answered pleasantly enough.

"You! You lie! You sent word to him to meet you at the Druid's Hill, and a woman to make sure he should never reach there!"

"Like father, like son!" Caswallon answered. "If your father is dead, why didn't you ride to fight me in his place, instead of sneaking through the dark to loot my Lunden Town? I have caught you in your father's shoes! But how did he die?"

"I say, she stabbed him!"

Caswallon made a hissing sound between his teeth.

"Where is she now?" he demanded; and the youngster chose to misinterpret the flat note of dissatisfaction in his voice.

"Aye," he sneered back, "she has earned Fflur's place! But you will have to win her first from Skell! Lud's mud! If there is any manhood in you, fight me before Skell comes with a dagger for your back!"

"Boy, I would have fought your father gladly, or you in his place," Caswallon answered. "I am vexed not to have slain him. But as for you now, you will do well to bridle impudence. You are not free, so you have no right to challenge any one."

"Lud's blood!" the youngster swore, "I came to burn your house! I'll ask no mercy!"

He spat, and a Briton close beside him would have struck him in the face, but Caswallon prevented that:

"Let him be. He has fire in his brain. Boy, I will not kill you, nor shall any woman kill you while you are at my charge. Will you lie in fetters until some foreign ship puts in needing rowers? Or shall I give you to my friend Tros?"

The youngster nearly wrenched his two guards off their feet as he turned to glare at Tros, whose amber eyes met his and laughed at him.

"Be still, boy!" Tros advised him. "If I say no to this, you will die of scurvy on some Phenician's deck, or else be sold to be chained to an Egyptian oar."

The youngster bit a word in two and swallowed half of it. He did not like to be laughed at, but it had only just begun to dawn on him that he was lawfully Caswallon's property, a prisoner caught in the act of rebellion, henceforth with no more rights than if he had been born a slave, not even the right to be hanged or burned alive.

"How many prisoners are taken?" Caswallon asked in a loud voice, and there was some calling to and fro through the mist before Orwic answered—

"Nine-and-thirty; also a dozen or fourteen who are hurt so they will not live."

"Brother Tros, how many will you need to build and man this ship your heart desires?" Caswallon asked.

"Ten score, at the least," Tros answered.

Caswallon laughed.

"Well, you have your Northmen, and now nine-and-thirty Britons, forty of them counting young Glendwyr. Maybe my men will catch a few more rebels for you. However, a man needs enemies, so they shall let some go! Boy, you belong to my brother Tros, but all your father's lands and property are mine."

Young Glendwyr hung his head and the men who held him would have tied his wrist if Tros had permitted; but Tros put two Northmen in charge of him, which stung the youngster less than if he had been tied, and mocked, by his own countrymen. Caswallon sent the other prisoners into

Lunden under guard, to await Tros' disposition.

"For the wine of excitement might go to your head if I should leave you in charge of them tonight, Tros. You might try your own turn at seizing Lunden!"

"Lunden is a good town, but it would irk me to have to govern it!" Tros answered.

Caswallon laughed, turning his head to listen to sounds approaching through the mist, wheels, hoofs and a voice.

"Pledge me your promise," he said suddenly.

Tros hated promises; like all men who habitually keep them, he regarded a blind promise as stark madness. Yet there was madness in the mist that night, and all rules went by the board. He heard a gasp from Conops, somewhere in the mist behind, as he raised his right hand and swore to do whatever service Caswallon might demand of him.

He could see Caswallon whispering to Orwic, and Orwic passing word along, but it was Conops who gave him the first inkling that he might be called on that night for performance, Conops, and then Helma, seizing his hand and pressing close against him. Conops said:

"Master, he will make a fool of you! Take back that promise before he——"

Helma said:

"Lord Tros, *I* am your wife, is it not so? This is my night. Will you——"



SOUNDS in the mist interrupted, sounds that included one familiar voice. A chariot emerged into the torch-glare, horses snorting clouds of vapor as they slid to a thundering halt, all feet together; and the first face Tros recognized was Fflur's, the torchlight in her eyes. She looked like an avenging goddess. It was she who drove, who reined the horses in, her hair all fury on her shoulders.

"I have them both!" she remarked.

Her voice was flat—determined. There were issues in the mist that night!

A chariot behind hers plunged to a standstill and Tros saw Cæsar's woman's face, white in the mist, with Skell's beside hers; and Skell looked like a ghost from beyond the borderland of death, with such fear in his eyes as a beast shows in the shambles. His arms were tied so taut behind him that his breast seemed ready to burst and the sinews of his neck stood out like bowstrings.

"Now prove you are a king, Caswallon! Do a king's work!" Fflur said; and her voice was flat again, no music in it.

"I will!" Caswallon laughed. "Bring them. I am good at kinging it!"

But Fflur appeared to doubt that; she watched like an avenging fury while men dragged Skell and the Gaulish woman from the chariot and stood them in front of Caswallon, where he considered both of them a minute without speaking.

Then suddenly he raised his voice, and though he spoke to all present it was plain enough that his words were aimed at Fflur—

"Shall a king protect men's property, or shall he squander it?"

All knew the answer to that. None spoke, not even Fflur, although she bit her lip.

"Shall a king offend the druids, or shall he abide their teachings?" Caswallon asked, speaking loud and high again.

They knew the answer to that, too. None spoke except the Gaulish woman. She cried aloud:

"Not the druids! Kill me!"

Then she began screaming, and a man clapped a cloth over her mouth, desisting when she grew calm.

"As for this woman," Caswallon said, "she was Cæsar's slave, and she now belongs to Tros—my brother Tros."

The woman flung herself sobbing in the mud at Tros' feet, clinging to his legs, crying to him:

"Lord Tros, mercy! I knew you were for the lord Caswallon! I stabbed the lord Glendwyr lest he should slay you! I am your slave! My knife is yours! My life is yours!"

"Be still!" Tros ordered gruffly.

He knew predicament was coming, needed all his wits to meet it. Emotion, such as she showed, angered him, and in anger there is not much wisdom.

"As for Skell, what say the druids?" asked Caswallon, raising his voice louder than before.

There was a murmur at that, but Skell was speechless; fear held him rigid, the whites of his eyes glistening. Caswallon spoke again, his head a little turned toward Fflur:

"The druids say, a good deed is for men to repay—evil deeds are for the gods to punish. What say you?"

There was murmuring again, but no words audible. Fflur's lips were white with pressure, and her eyes blazed as Caswallon turned to face her:

"Mother of my sons," he said, "this Skell was once a friend of mine. He helped when Lunden burned. He helped rebuild it. Shall I slay?"

Fflur answered him at last, thin-lipped, breathing inward:

"You will never listen to me! It must be your decision!"

"Nay!" he answered, laughing, "you are always right! What shall I do with him?"

"Do what you will! You are the king!" she answered angrily.

Caswallon laughed again.

"True. I should not forget I am the king!"

"You let other men forget it!" Fflur retorted.

"Skell shall remember!" Caswallon turned from her and looked straight at Tros. "Brother Tros, you have told me you will build a ship, for which you will need a great crew. Just now you have made me a promise to do whatever I choose to ask. Was that in good faith?"

"It was my spoken word," said Tros; but he answered guardedly—he did not care to be public executioner, even of such a treacherous sneak as he knew Skell was.

"Then take Skell! He is your slave! Use him! Set him on an oar-bench and sweat the treason out of him! Work manhood in, for that must come from outside, since what he had of it he seems to have lost!"

Fflur laughed, high-pitched and cynical. Skell looked at Tros as a tied steer eyes the butcher.

"Slave?" he said, wetting his lips with his tongue. "I was born free. Oar-bench?"

"Aye!" Tros answered. "Loose him, lest his arms grow weak! I will keep that promise," he said, grinning at Caswallon. "His hands shall blister and his hams shall burn. If he has freedom in him, he shall earn it!"

So they loosed Skell, and the Northmen took charge of him with low-breathed insults, despising him as neither Norse nor Briton, but a traitor to both races, speaking both tongues. Tros, arms behind him, stared at the Gaulish woman, who was kneeling in the mud.

"Mine?" he wondered. "Mine? By Pluto, what should a seaman do with you?"

And Caswallon chuckled, waiting. The woman tried to smile, but fear froze her again when Helma stood beside Tros, taking his hand to remind him of her rights.

"I need no wench to wait on me!" said Helma.

"You shall go to Cæsar!" Tros said finally. "You shall take my message to him.

"You shall say: 'Whatever Tros needs that Cæsar has, Tros will take without Cæsar's leave or favor!'

"Bid him send me no more slave-women, but guard himself against a blow that comes! And lest you lie about that message, woman, I will chisel it on bronze and rivet that to a chain around your neck!"

"So! Then this business is over," said Caswallon. "The druids wait. Send your Northmen back to Lunden with your prisoners, Tros. We must make haste."

He signed to the Northmen to take the prisoners away, and offered Tros and Helma places in the chariot beside him, then shouted to the team and drove like a madman through the mist.

He said not another word until the horses leaped a stream and the bronze wheels struck deep into the far bank; then, when they breasted a mist-wreathed hill beneath dripping branches and he had glanced over-shoulder to make sure Fflur followed, and Orwic, and a score of mounted men behind their chariots, he tossed speech to Tros in fragments:

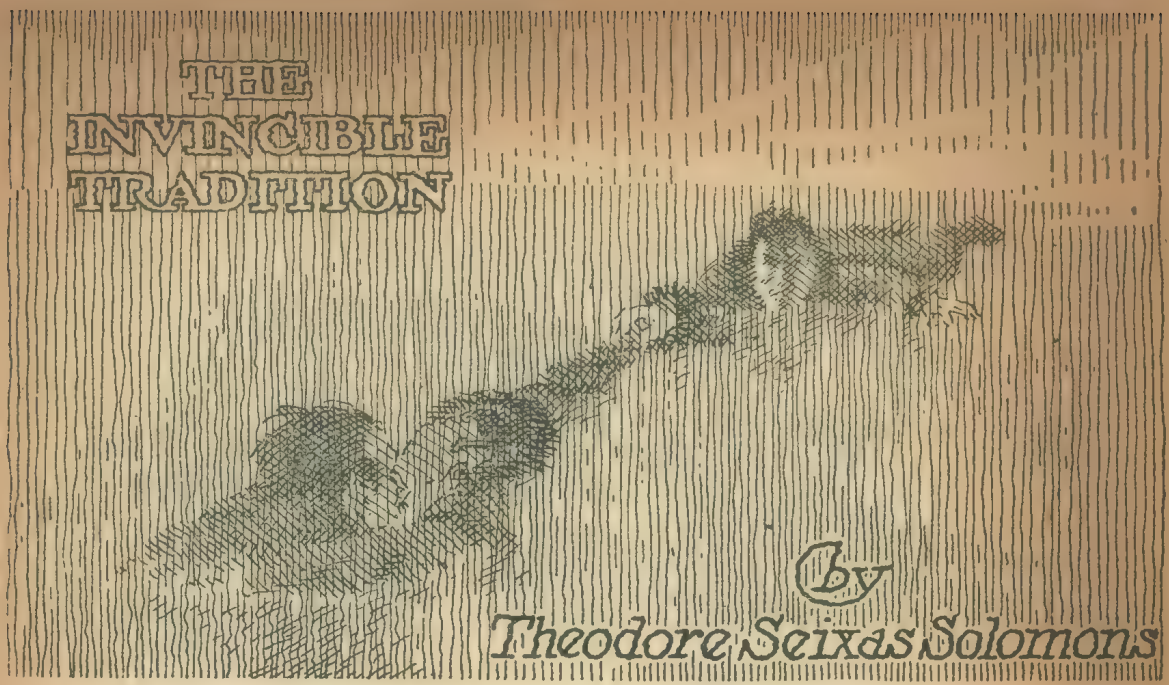
"Too many druids, not enough king! If druids keep me waiting, men say 'Hah! even Caswallon must cool his heels!' But if I keep them waiting, they say 'Caswallon is irreligious!' Nevertheless, unless I king it carefully there will be neither king nor druids!

"And the druids know that. They must wait for me. And I think that dawn is a better time for funerals than midnight, because at dawn men hope, whereas at night they are afraid.

"So, Brother Tros, you shall attend your father's funeral after all, and all my people shall believe you are my friend. I will bid the druids thank you that Lunden wasn't plundered while they prayed! On yon horses. Ho, there! Hi! Hi-yi! Which is the hardest, brother Tros, to king it or to captain a ship at sea?"

But Tros did not know the answer to that question; he only knew which of the two tasks he himself preferred.

THE INVINCIBLE TRADITION



By Theodore Seixas Solomons

Author of "In the Maw of the Ice," "Jeff the Guesser," etc.

IN THE fall, havoc reigns on the tidal rivers and lagoons of the Arctic coast.

Winter on the northern tundra, facing the sea, is a simple affair. Calm and great cold alternate with scourging, deadly blizzards; but the water that was in sea and rivers, is as fixed as the land. Spring unlocks the ice and moves it grandly forth, out of the ken of men. Summer dapples with light and shade the dun hills and coastal plains.

But October rouses this coast to rampancy—as Jim Knight and Joe Woods learned to their sorrow when, weeks before their planning, they bucked scum ice all the way across Kotzebue Sound, broke the crust nearly to the head of Buckland lagoon, and, wet, half frozen and cursing volubly, made shore and camp on a dismal, rocky point, getting their outfit ashore a box or a sack at a time. They had three dogs in their whale boat and hickory strips and sticks for as fine a basket sled as old Alaskans could make.

The makings for it were hardly a substitute for the sled itself; yet a sled then and there would have done them no good, for there was no snow. The air was deadly cold and only winds and tides and the current of the river playing the game of chaos.

Chaos, indeed, it seemed to these men from the interior. A south wind blowing the Pacific water into the Arctic and they beheld the miracle of an off-shore wind, piling the sea on the beaches and backing the waters of the lagoon and river until the bordering flats were flooded, the promontories half-submerged, and their beached outfit threatened with drowning. So, higher on the rocks they moved it, sweating at the task all night in a dark so dense they bumped each other, coming and going.

Then, while the risen waters were still sustained by the south wind that blew over half a continent, new ice formed—half a foot of it in a night and a day. And when the water finally subsided this ice sheet was lowered upon the flats capping the summit of every boulder and rock of the lagoon shores, and making queer ice-mushrooms, which later were built up by the snow into strange, ghostly shapes.

Yet fall was not through with its tricks. The pent waters of the river, released at last, found entry between the old and new ice-crusts, and, coursing down the wide lagoon, raised the new ice to a normal level and depressed the old, wearing it through here and there in a way no man but an Eskimo could know.

Knight and Woods knew nothing of this, when the weather settled, but that the lagoon seemed open again along the lines of its normal channels, and if they could manage to obtain a flat boat or some sort they could get their outfit—in which they

had invested every cent they could rake together—out of that point of rocks and on up the Buckland to where they were going.

The rush to the south shores of Kotzebue—to Candle and Deering—was in its infancy. It was the first winter that white men were to pass in that new placer-mining region. Enterprising ones like Knight and Woods shunned the immediate region of the strike at Candle, and were piercing hither and thither, preparing to prospect new streams. These two men were the last to come in by way of the sea.

They knew where Candle town must lie—westward, over the low hills. There must be boats galore there. They got the perishable part of their outfit into the shelter of their tent, fastened its flaps, and struck out for Candle. It was a day's mush over sodden, slippery tundra, a rime of half-melted snow clogging their feet.



NAGACHUCK, oldest of a small group of Eskimo who wintered every few years on the Buckland, five miles from the head of the lagoon, had been told by his nephew, out ptarmigan hunting in the interlude of good weather, that white men had landed in a big boat near the coast. He had walked three miles to an eminence, squinted his piercing eyes against the glint of the sun, and seen for himself that this was true. All the way back he had glowered and muttered to the dog that followed him.

Nagachuck the Mutterer he was; or, to be exact, the Mutterer against white men. He was not criticized for this, for his hate was not without reason. Years before, at the end of a winter of unprecedented cold—and marvellous, prime fur—he had been robbed not only of his furs but of his young wife by some swift-moving miscreant white—who was, however, not swift-moving enough! For Nagachuck had hunted out and killed him, and, after him, another whom Nagachuck took to be the white one's friend and therefore avenger.

Nagachuck was a large man, powerful when meat was plentiful for a season and quick and lithe always. He was mild enough with his kin, wise in council as to the sealing, and his seniority—this, with wisdom being the only needful qualifications for such chieftainship as his people acknowledged—gave him that influence which is the all-sufficient substitute for authority among the small, half-Nomadic groups of Alaskan Eskimos.

When the first white miners came, Nagachuck counseled driving them away or killing them. But his brethren only smiled indulgently, thinking this unnecessary and absurd as well as unkind.

They had high hopes of better trading than was possible with the whaling ships that, in ever-decreasing numbers, had come yearly to the sand-spits of Kotzebue Sound. When more whites came he had frowned and muttered, but said nothing. For, after all, they were in Candle, these ground-digging white men. Let his brethren there, the Kugarluk Eskimo, do as they might about it. The Buckland was as yet uninvaded. But now!

When he returned he went straight to the igloo of his son-in-law, Streechuck, who—strangely enough—was a white man, one Ike Holland, an ex-whaler stranded years before and given hospitality by the people of Nagachuck who, himself, happened to be away at the time. When he returned and found his daughter already too much attached to the scrawny, almost toothless sailor for a seemly parting, he gave the man Eskimo clothes, taught him to use a spear and made it plain to the white man—whose years in the Arctic had given him some knowledge of their speech—that he would be safe *if he stayed!*

Whether Streechuck stayed from choice or virtual necessity he alone knew. Though the natives thought nothing of it, a fellow white man might have regarded it as significant that Streechuck ever kept aloof from trading whites. Whenever a whale ship lay in the Sound, Ike Holland was off hunting. Once, only, he wronged a native—stole from him—but his wife forced him to make restitution before the theft was discovered.

Nagachuck, in wrath, told of his discovery to his son-in-law who, because he lacked many things for which he hungered, became immediately interested. And when the gray-haired Eskimo inquired of him sternly how these whites who had invaded the Buckland were to be dealt with, Holland, cocking a shrewd eye, answered that there was but one safe way—to deprive them of their most cherished possessions, so that they might be forced to go away. He offered to assist.

Nagachuck was a man of hate, not avarice. But had he not been just and—

since he was an Eskimo—kind, he would much have preferred to kill the new-comers should they persist in staying. For, though the Eskimo rarely kills, he does not hesitate to do so when he deems it necessary.

"You are right," he replied, after thinking it over. "Though I want none of their goods, we shall take that which they must have, thus forcing them to leave. Let us find our dogs at once."

Thus it was that when Jim Knight and Joe Woods started westward at daybreak next morning two pair of eyes observed their departure from a clump of stunted willows across the lagoon; and when they returned from Candle town, two days later, they found their tent rifled. Disgust and anger vied with amazement, for they would have sworn the region was uninhabited. What particularly enraged them was the disappearance of their strips of hickory. They had been unable to bring a boat. They *must* make a sled!

Rapidly they noted the disappearance of many things, and thought the theft a random catching up of a sled-load of food and equipment. But it was not that. Ike Holland, long hungering for certain delectables, had made careful selection. In particular, he had always hated the stiff, clumsy Eskimo sleds, with their solid runners, and his greedy eyes had lighted covetously at sight of the strips of clear, straight-grained hickory.

Nagachuck had made demur, at first, to the taking of the sled lumber. For now that the ice had come, how could these men get away, he asked, except with a sled? But Holland replied that, leaving them their sled, they would continue on up the Buckland notwithstanding that he and Nagachuck might deprive them of much of their goods, these white gold diggers being a persistent and insolent crew. But with their sled wood vanished they would be discouraged utterly and return again to Candle, where they belonged.



KNIGHT and Woods did, indeed, start back toward Candle But it was with blood in their eye! They wanted the aid of a deputy marshal. Suddenly, however, when out a mile, Knight grasped the shoulder of his partner, stopping him.

"I reckon we're —— fools, Joe," he exclaimed disgustedly. "One of us oughter be enough to get that deppity feller. Those hounds are gonna come back to our camp and get more, sure's you're a foot high. I'll sneak back and watch for 'em!"

Woods squinted at him. "Ain't they liable to git you, too?"

"Not if I see 'em first," replied Knight. "And I aim to do just that!"

It was certainly a chanceful undertaking, savoring of suicide. But that was Jim Knight, as any old-timer in the Arctic knows.

Reluctantly Woods consented; and Knight retraced his way to the bare, desolate camp above the ice-festooned rocks of the promontory.

These rocks at once shaped themselves to the designs of the irate miner. He took from the tent some food which could be eaten raw—crackers, canned milk, cheese, dried fruit—and his caribou-skin bag, and found a nook among the mushroom rocks which commanded a view both of the tent and its approaches.

Solaced by his pipe, he began the long watch. Nothing whatever happened during that day. Night came, and the miner slept, his common sense telling him that the thieves would not choose darkness to renew their robbery of a camp which was deserted in the day-time. Late next morning his vigil was rewarded.

Ike Holland had convinced his father-in-law that they had not yet reduced the possessions of the invaders sufficiently to cripple them and force them to retreat.

Knight saw them crossing the lagoon—boldly enough it seemed. He did not know that they were very wary of the ice, especially where the lagoon glittered. He crouched more closely within the rock niche that concealed him as the two men drove their scraggly dogs directly for the tent.

He tried to see if they were armed, but he could observe upon them only the sailor's sheath knives which coast natives usually carry. These gave him no concern; but he would have given much to know if the sled concealed a rifle. The one gun which he and Woods possessed, an old Winchester, was among the articles missing from the tent. Knight was armed with a Colt revolver. He formed his plan, which was a simple one, though bold.

He would let them take more. It would be mainly grub, for most of the non-eatables were already gone. If he tried to capture them now he might never learn where

those more valuable parts of the outfit had been taken. He wanted to be sure; and the surest way to learn was to let them steal more, cross the lagoon and from the other side take their course—north or south or east. He hoped they would stay until dusk or dark, so he might follow them unobserved.

Yet he determined to follow them anyhow and to capture them if he could. The plan's one weak spot was due to his ignorance of the ways of Arctic coast ice.

The thieves remained in the tent a long while; and Knight began to hope they would not emerge until the early shadows descended on the lagoon. In this he was disappointed. They began to make trips to the sled, loading it but lightly.

"Goin' easy on us this time?" he wondered. "Or have they got all they want?"

No, Ike Holland had not all he wanted. There was quite another reason for the light loading of the sled.

The thieves made off, slantwise, across the lagoon, the old Eskimo ahead guiding, the white man at the clumsy handlebars. And Jim Knight crawled out of his retreat, not bothering to drag after him his skin bed.

He had a little food and kindlings in his parka's breast pouch; on his hip was his Colt; and in his heart a murderous anger.

He dodged around the rocks to the side of the tent, and from this cover peeped out and watched the moving line upon the ice. When it was half a mile away he pulled his heavy gauntlet mitts tight upon his hands, shoved his parka sleeves snugly into them, and crawled out upon the ice. His overalls were new and of brown duck. The ice was dry. This was because the tide was out, but he did not know that.

On hands and knees, like a bear, he made forward rapidly from hummock to hummock among the protruding, ice-capped rocks of the shallow shore. They would expect no pursuit; they would probably not look back. If they did they would not be likely to see him. Never mind that—though he much preferred to get their true course homeward before he was observed.

In fifteen minutes—he had to crawl low, now, for he was beyond the shelter of the protruding rocks—he raised his head occasionally and saw that the thieves veered constantly. This enabled him to lessen the distance between them. But when, suddenly, he found the ice wet he decided it would be imprudent, in that air, to crawl longer. He must keep dry. So he arose and walked in a crouched-over posture, watching the men ahead of him with all his eyes to note if they observed him. Apparently they did not observe him.

Apparently! Jim Knight, a forthright man, a forthright fighter, was no sleuth versed in the ways of rat-like, guilt-conscious men, nor of the always alert natives. He had been observed from the first moment he emerged from the rocks. And Ike Holland and Nagachuck had divined his intentions and planned to kill him.

The old Eskimo, obsessed with the not ignoble purpose of ridding his people of the invading, all-consuming strangers, would have shot him out of hand. But he was half-cracked from the shocks of years before—as Ike Holland was aware—and little knew or recked of the consequences. Not so Holland, whose constant care both before and since he became a "squaw-man" had been the keeping of a whole skin! He reminded Nagachuck that under the white-man's law, absurdly forced upon them by these aliens, theft was much less of an offense than killing.

The tides would still run for a number of days and obliterate the signs of the sled. But a killed white man would freeze in, yet not be covered up until the uncertain coming of the big snow; and, lying there on the ice, would point the way to white pursuers. Let them, then, lure him farther—to where the ice was thin and the Buckland water flowed beneath! The body would never be seen until next summer, in the open Arctic, if it were not consumed before then.

So, never turning their heads to warn the white man that he had been seen, they veered gradually toward the head of the lagoon and nearer and nearer to its channels where tide water, merging with the outflow of the river, obscured the treachery of its undermining.

Jim Knight, not relishing a sprawl in water to duck a rifle bullet, hurried after them, and when he judged the distance right for his purpose, bawled to them to stop.



IKE HOLLAND turned. It would have been useless to pretend he did not hear, in the dead-level silence of the lagoon. He gave one quick look and pretended alarm. He called to his father-in-law to swerve

again and go faster. But soon their pace slowed once more.

Jim Knight smiled. There was no rifle! He might follow as he pleased and try to take them with his revolver. They might escape him with a counter revolver fire or by the speed of their dogs, once the ice was smooth and dry. But he would know where he and Woods and the "deppity" were to seek them—and the loot. So, on he went, sloshing rapidly through water ankle-deep, imagining that where they could go with their sled he could follow with his two good feet encased in high, water-tight skin boots.

Nagachuck would have steered, now, for the thin ice of the left channel, and, when the pursuer should attempt the crossing, would have shot him, trusting to the river water to complete the eating out of the new ice and carry the body down. But Holland was more careful. He took the lead, guided his victim with sinister, consummate cunning to a place where no rifle bullet would be needed to stop him.

It was the splitting point of the two channels. Nearer and nearer he drew toward that cul-de-sac of the forking channels where, as he knew, ice-bridges, still firm for a sled but fatal for a man, might always be found under the surface flow.

Alternately slithering along on dry ice and sloshing through water came Jim Knight, gaining on them, his revolver in his hand, reckless with rage and the thought of victory. And when he saw the team darting this way and that after the searching Holland he was sure they sought only a shallow place to cross the line of water so that they might wet as little as possible of the ill-gotten contents of their sled. And he, caring little, now, for a wetting, forged straight toward them and was soon knee-deep in water.

Holland, coaxing the dogs, slipped by them toward the sled—very cautiously, in reality, but this was lost upon Jim Knight. Then, holding to the sled, gaining thus the help of its wide bearing surface on the ice-bridge beneath, he and Nagachuck passed swiftly over, and, canting slightly upward from the channel, gained the firmer, though still surmerged ice.

Knight, feeling the water rising upon him, followed the way of the sled. This was easy, for the men he pursued had slowed—purposely, to guide him. Thus he came to the shallower part—the ice-bridge—chuckling to himself that he would dog their footsteps to their land trail, might even capture them bodily. . . .

Suddenly in he crashed!

It is a strange kind of "crash"—through rotten, submerged ice. It lacks the all-important element of sound. But the startled, fear-sickened inner senses supply this; and Jim Knight felt flindering ice, heard the dry, almost metallic breaking through; and his heart contracted sharply at the going down, down of his leg!

Ike Holland, his head partly turned, walking slowly, his hand on the sled, saw the sudden side lurch of the pursuing miner and knew it was the beginning of the end. He cried to his dogs and hurried away. For, lacking the animus of personal hatred the dregs of the humanity still in him made him reluctant to look upon the death-struggles of the ice-trapped man.



IT WAS well for him that he moved rapidly; for Knight, in leaping rage, thrust up his revolver and shot at the scrawny white devil who was brisking away—a gesture of vengeance that seemed a precious moment wasted. Yet the effort, pitching his slanted body over, plunged the hand with the revolver into the water to find the ice and thrust him straight again.

He struggled to regain footing in the rotten stuff he could tread but could not see, flailing the water with beating arms and churning feet, upholding himself, moment after moment, by the mere strength and rapidity of these flailings, like a clock running down.

Nagachuck, forgetting momentarily that the stranger was their intended victim, looked with perplexity at the fleeing squaw-man. For this was not a time when natives flee. But at once he remembered their purpose—remembered his hate of these despoilers of the hunting and trapping and sealing grounds of his brethren. And he stood and looked on the work of himself and the squaw-man, unafraid to confront it. He even came nearer to the brink—near enough to see the piteous look of horror in the staring eyeballs of the doomed man.

Then the centuries worked upon him—centuries of survival of a people isolated upon the rim of the world, in long darkness, desolate cold. A people that had survived

only because they had learned union, helpfulness, brotherhood.

To paddle together the frail skin boat in foaming seas; to strike together under the fangs and claws of the great white bear; to rescue, to revive; to feed to the hungry their last bit of frozen fish, their last drop of oil; to scale the black cliff for the first wild-fowl eggs for the sick child of a friend; to count their own strength, their own breath as but part of the strength and breath of all—this was the very salt of the blood that coursed through the veins of Nagachuck.

Even the cruel wrong that had racked him a life-time could not gainsay it. For what is a life-time in the life of a race—a race grown into the very image of the tradition that has upheld it and made it to survive? Nagachuck's life-time fled away as he looked in the agonized face of the valiantly struggling man, leaving him only Eskimo, tingling, surcharged with the fervors of an invincible tradition.

Over his head he jerked off his long parka, whipped it twistingly into the air until it resembled a six-foot length of clumsy rope, and, himself flat on the margin ice, his upbent head alone free of the water, flung out the parka end to the desperately plunging, drowning man.

Only a moment it was before Jim Knight would have been sucked into the depths of the channel, lagoon slime beneath, ice above, ceiling him as in a tomb. He snatched at the twisted parka at its neck, and the knot-like hood gave the miner's fingers a sure hold on the garment.

Backward crawled Nagachuck, and called in his gutturals to the drowning man to "Spread-out; spread-out!" For Knight was still churning with his feet, breaking down, destroying, his only means of escape—the up-bearing surface of the submerged ice.

It was only when the native illustrated, raising legs and arm and spraddling them out on the ice, that Knight understood him and threw his limbs and body straight out. Then, though he sank for a moment, stout old Nagachuck was able to draw him upward to solid ice—and safety!

Panting, shivering, with strength only to keep his head above the water, he lay staring into the inscrutable, dark eyes of the alien man. And Nagachuck returned his stare, with neither love nor hate, for he was bewildered, wondering at what he had done, wondering still more why he had done it.

Slowly the gray-haired Eskimo came to his feet and lifted the miner up. And together they walked ashore and the native made a fire, having matches in a small, hollowed bone fitted so closely to its cover that no month's soaking could wet it. Long before, Ike Holland and the team had become like a line of insects moving across the tundra plain, southward.

When the two were nearly dry—"*Eelooit alucktok*"—"You go"—said Nagachuck, gesturing the man away.

There was emotion in his voice, for he had come to decision. He, too, would go—in an opposite direction, to the far Seelawik where there were no hills of gold, where no white despoilers would be tempted to follow. He would send back his message to his people to demolish their igloos and, with the coming of the big snow, to pack their meagre all upon their sleds and follow him to their old grounds on the inland Seelawik lakes.

Without further word to the white man he turned his face to the north and walked away.

Jim Knight, his strength recovered, stared upon the retreating back of the strange being that had robbed him, lured him toward death—and snatched him from its hideous maw! Then he faced about, jog-trotted around the shore of the lagoon and, by the early stars, took a westerly course for Candle.

Just before darkness closed he descried figures approaching. A moment later he was face to face with his partner, Joe Woods, and a "deppity." They held quick converse—too quick for the telling of the last part of the story.

"Where did they go?" asked the deputy marshal.

Jim Knight pointed out into the darkness.

"South," he answered. "*Both* of them!"



Author of "Observation," "On the Cards," etc.

IT WAS a chilly, dreary night in early November. A fine, misty rain was falling and the passers-by along the waterfront walked swiftly and with their coat collars turned high about their ears.

Water dripped from the eaves of houses and fell splashing into the dirty streets,and the harbor lights, red white and green, blinked gloomily. River crafts, their outlines dim and vague, swept by like ghostly shadows. A policeman, in a friendly doorway with his hands deep in his pockets and his club beneath his arm, wished himself at home, and watched with slight interest the two men before him on the curb.

One was a tall man, big of frame but lean and emaciated. He faced the walk and eyed closely from beneath the brim of his draggled slouch hat, the faces of all that passed. The other was a short, pudgy man with a square, frank face, who pulled roughly at the arm of his companion in an endeavor to draw him away.

"Come on, Dolan you fool," the small man was saying. "Don't stand here gawking like a lunatic. Man, you're like a race horse. Up and down the water front, around the docks, from ship to ship like a wild man. Give it up, it's no go. He's gone from the ship, d'ye hear me, gone. Come, sit down and rest. Have some coffee, you need it."

The other shook him off impatiently.

"No, no," he said in a hoarse growl. "He's not gone. I'll find him. Men of the sea always come back, even the rotten hulks of men. Three years—my ——!"

He shivered, and his wan cheeks, lean and drawn, indeed like those of an over worked race horse, twitched spasmodically with the working of his mouth.

"I'll find him—" he looked closely at his companion as if forgetful of his identity—"Carrell, and when I do—" He lifted his hands and twined his long, slender fingers about an imaginary throat.

"Come on," Carrell persisted. He pointed to a cheap restaurant a few doors away. "Have something to eat and some coffee."

"No! He might pass. Did I ever tell you what he did? Listen——"

"I have heard it a dozen times, but I'll listen again if you'll come in with me."

"Will you? Will you?" The tall man grasped the other delightedly by the arm. "I'll go then. You don't think he'll pass, do you? Eh?" He bent and looked into the small man's face.

"No, he won't pass. Come on." With Dolan's arm in his he led the way toward the eating place.

The policeman, deprived of his only object of interest, sank deeper into his coat.

"Poor Dolan," he murmured. "Crazy as

a loon these three years. And him once chief officer of a crack liner."

He shook his head sadly. Reaching into his pocket he drew forth a plug of tobacco, and after glancing warily up and down the street bit off a huge piece.

"He's bad tonight, always is when it rains. Donno but what I aught to run him in for safe keepin'—guess he's harmless though."



IN THE restaurant, Dolan, with his food untouched before him, was talking excitedly across the table to Carrell.

"'Twas the *Penguin*," he was saying, "the old *Penguin*. Just north of Watling we hit a derelict, bottom up. Tore the bow completely out of us it did. I was mate and he was master. I went forward and down into number one hold to look at the damage. She was down by the bow and settlin' but there was a bulkhead still holding aft of the forward hold. It was weak and bound to give and I told the captain. I knew she was goin'. Twas two o'clock in the morning when we took to the boats. The captain was a miserable coward. He went wild with fear. Poor Jim Mullins—didja know Jim—and I were the last to start for the boats.

"The captain stood at the rail and trembled and couldn't talk straight he was so scared. It was rough, you know. He wouldn't let Jim and I slide down into the boat. Said there wasn't room enough. He lied—there was room for a dozen. He was just a cowardly swine. Shot Jim, he did—through the head, then lost his gun and beat me over the head with a stanchion. Right here, see?"

He leaned foreward and traced with his fingers a ragged scar that ran from his left ear half across his head.

"I fell in the water-way and lay there all night—Jim washed away over the side. The wind died down and it started to rain. It rained until morning and I lay there rolling around in the water way. Then the sun came up and it was hot—hot as ——! I wanted water—tried to crawl and couldn't. No water—hot as ——! Then—then—" He was wandering. "Then——"

"Then you were picked up by a——"

"Yes, that's right. I was picked up by a ship—a tramp. All red she was—red lead, you know. I think she was a tramp. Couldn't see very well—my eyes were all full of blood, I'd been layin' in it all night. It was in my eyes and—and—and——"

"Yes, yes. Forget it, old man—eat your food."

"Oh, all right."

His eyes calmed and he fell to ravenously for a while, then looking up suddenly with the old wild light, he said:

"'Twas north of Watling, dya mind? And it rained——"

"*Will you* eat?" The small man thumped on the table in mock anger.

"Yes, but listen!" Dolan's eyes were gleaming savagely. "I wanta tell you. I'm sailing tomorrow—on the *Estrella del Norte*—did you know it? Bosun—bosun—forget his name—used to be with me on the Taboga—gave me a job—A.B. I got a reason, see? I'm gettin' closer to him—oh, I can tell—feel it here, when it rains."

He placed the palm of his hand upon the livid scar.

"When it rains like north of Watling, dya see? And the sun——"



IT WAS hot, with the sultry humidity that proceeds the short, fierce squall of the tropics. In the stuffy forecastle, reeking with the stench of sweating men, the sailors in the double tier of bunks rolled restlessly in their sleep. A boy, with the pale skin of the city dweller, lay fully clothed in a bunk, on his back with his legs dangling sidewise into the narrow aisle.

A stocky, blond-mustached man, bearing the marks of a true sailor, stepped over the sill and into the forecastle. He stared about for a moment in the light of the smoky oil lamp bracketed on the after end of the quarters, then seeing the boy sprawled in the bunk he strode over and kicked roughly at the dangling feet.

"Up, ye scut," he said in a low growl. "Break out of it!" He kicked again at the feet.

"Huh?" said the lad, and he sat up and rubbed his lids apart.

"Get up, —— ye."

The man grasped the boy by the arm and yanked him to his feet.

"Mate wants 'is coffee."

"Yeah?" The boy stretched lazily and stamped his feet to start the circulation in his legs. "What time is it?" he asked.

"Quarter of two. And cut thet stompin' er ye'll rouse all hands."

The lad stretched again and yawned loudly with a calm unconcern of whom he awakened.

"Where are we?" he asked presently.

"North of Watling, I heered the mate say," answered the other, and he slumped down upon a stool and reached for his pipe. A form in a bunk at his back twisted uneasily.

The boy started toward the door, stopped and turned. "North of what?" he asked.

"North of Watling, ye fool!" roared the man. He made a menacing move and the boy scuttled through the open doorway. The man in the berth stirred, sighed heavily and sat up.

The impending squall came down with a rush from the northeast and the *Estrella del Norte* began to pitch and roll in the quartering swell. The wind came first in puffs, then in a steady thunder of wind and flying spray that sent the half empty freighter heeling far over to leeward. A flash of blue lightning streaked downward and licked the tops of the foam crested waves in the distance.

From the open door of the sailor's forecastle came a man in a long oilskin and a sou'wester. He was a tall man, lean of statue and with cheeks drawn like those of a tired race horse, and he made his way along the heaving deck with the assurance of a born sailor.

He went aft to the bridge, mounted the ladder and stepping into the pilot house stopped before the chart board illuminated by the downcast rays of a shaded electric lamp. With parallel rulers and dividers he stepped off several distances in the rapid manner of the skilled navigator, then dropped them with a sigh.

"North of Watling," he murmured. "North of Watling." The man at the wheel glanced over his shoulder at the dim form bending over the chart board and then resumed his steering.

Above, on the bridge, Captain Bleibtree, a big, full-faced man with a loose mouth and small pig-like eyes, clenched both hands tightly about the stanchion before him and turned to his mate.

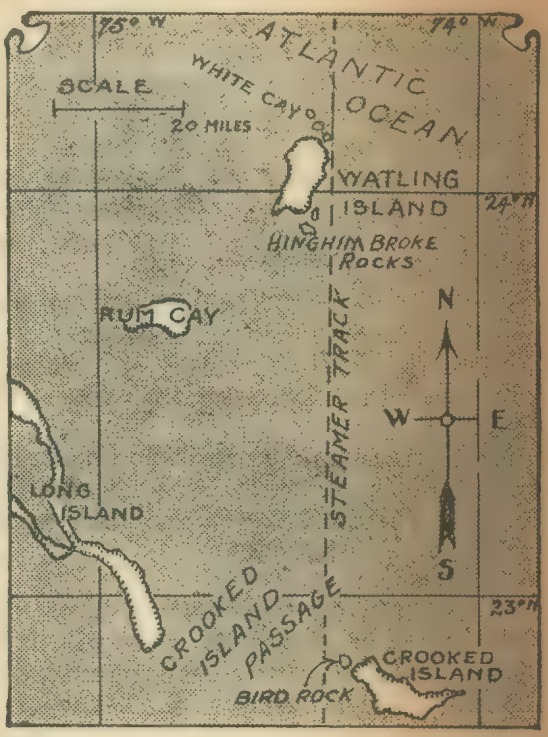
"Mr. Nordstrom," he said in a thin, high-pitched voice, "will you go and see to the 'tween-deck ports? Have Chips dog 'em down again and look the ship over while you're below. The way she's rolling—" He looked fearfully at the mounting swells and his lips quivered.

"She's safe as a church," said Mr. Nordstrom, and his mouth was sneering. "But I'll look her over Cap'n, just the same."

He clumped angrily across the bridge and down the port ladder. The captain crouched in the corner and hung on.

He felt the presence of some one and turning saw a tall form, erect and swaying easily to the roll of the vessel, at his elbow.

"We'll have to leave her, Cap'n" the stranger said in a voice that sounded strangely familiar. "She's down by the



head and all the weight of the ship is on the forward water-tight bulkhead. It can't hold long—I put my hand on it and it's trembling. When it gives she'll go down like a shot."

There was a familiar ring of authority to the voice and the words sent the captain back against the rail in fright. "What—what?" he gasped.

"We must take to the boats." The man leaned close and stared into Captain Bleibtree's face. "Why, you're afraid!" he exclaimed wonderingly. "We'll take to the boats, d'ya hear. Right away. Bosun, bosun—" He looked behind him and seemed surprised that no one was there. "Where are you, Bose? He was

here a minute ago." Then to the captain, "Where's Jim—Jim Mullins?"

At the mention of the name Captain Bleibtree threw an arm before his face and cowered further into his corner. "My ——!" he cried. "Who are you?"

"I—I—" The man wiped his eyes with the back of his hand and muttered vaguely.

His military attitude was gone and he was back in his accustomed slouch. The main force of the squall had passed, and the rain, coming after, spattered upon the lean cheeks. With the first dash of cool water his features underwent a transformation and his eyes glowed in the darkness like living coals. He pointed a long forefinger at the master and his mouth worked with a fierce hatred.

"Ah, now I know. At last—you—Captain Bleibtree. You—the coward—the murderer. You—who shot Jim Mullins and left me to go down with the *Penguin*—in the rain—the sun. The heat—no water. Look at me! I'm Dolan, don't you know me? Look here."

He bared his head and exhibited the scar showing white through his thin hair.

"You did that! You dog! I'll strangle you—tear the heart out of you—with these."

He advanced and grasped the fear stricken captain by the throat with his claw-like fingers. "With these—in the rain—north of Watling. You swine!"



WHEN forced into a corner the most craven of men will fight back, and it is often the cowardly, fear-crazed man who is the most dangerous. Captain Bleibtree, though wild-eyed and blubbering with fright, fought with a savage ferocity that equalled that of the avenger.

He exerted all the strength of his powerful body in a vain attempt to tear from his throat the hands that were slowly throttling him.

Across the bridge they struggled, then back again to the corner, where Dolan forced the captain to his knees and wrenched fiercely at the flesh within his grasp. The captain was weakening but with a last desperate effort he threw himself backward and kicked straight out with both feet, catching the other above the ankles and sending him toppling to the deck where his head struck solidly against the rivet studded angle-iron. He rolled over and twisted convulsively. With blood running from the corners of his mouth and down along his mottled throat the captain arose, and still in the throes of a mortal fear, and mad with a demoniacal hatred of the man who had menaced him for three years, he seized the limp form in his arms and sent it hurling over the rail and into the sea, then with his face ghastly, but with his mouth quivering with relief, he leaned weakly against the rail and stared out into the murk astern.

He started at a voice but was unable to turn. "She is all right, Cap'n," it said. "And the squall is over anyway. I figured the position and we are fourteen miles *north of Watling*."

The captain, with his arms frozen about the stanchion before him, gasped, trembled, and stared fearfully into the night.



ON THE bridge deck of the freighter *Estrella del Norte*, anchored in Cristobal harbor and only waiting for morning to go alongside the dock, Captain Bleibtree lolled in his canvas deck chair and gazed lazily over the stern at the lights of the twin cities, Cristobal and Colon. He was extremely comfortable and, although there was a slight feeling of uneasiness lurking some where in the dim recesses of his mind, he was content.

The menace of three years, the vague shadow that had haunted his dreams, the constant threat of vengeance that had dogged his footsteps, had been removed—fortunately without trace. A seaman had disappeared at sea—that was all.

Such an occurance was not unusual and was nothing to cause undue comment. He had entered it in the log, written an official report of the happening to be sent to the authorities upon arrival and in the captain's opinion the matter was closed.

All was well, and he rubbed his hands in a satisfied manner, then settled deeper in his chair and fell to watching the ever-changing clouds that scurried across the evening sky.

It was a night to gladden the heart. The clouds, rolling in great fleecy balls over the sea rim and, sailing swiftly across the gray-blue inverted saucer of sky, reflected from their under surface the silvery light of the moon not yet above the eastern horizon, and the trade wind, hardly more than a breeze, and laden heavily with its burden of spicy

aromas from the shores of Hispaniola, sighed through the shrouds.

The long rollers of the restless Caribean spent themselves against the breakwaters, and the little ship, bow to the sea and tugging gently at her chain, heaved and sighed as she nodded to the passing swells that crept into the bay. Over head a gannet, black and white and squawking raucously, planed and whirled, and overside a school of flying-fish flitted and splashed along the starlit surface.

The captain lolled luxuriously and smiled contentedly at the sky. On the tarpaulin-covered top of number two hatch, just forward of the bridge, a group of sailors were assembled, and their voices came up to him in a faint murmur.

A puff of tobacco smoke drifted up and sailed off to leeward. For lack of a more interesting occupation he began listening idly to the voices.

The mess-boy's thin, high voice was the first to make itself clear.

"—and then he went along the port side and up into the pilot house, then out again and up the bridge ladder. Then I don't know where he went. It was 'im all right, and I betcha——"

"Whut wuz thet, boy?" broke in a gruff voice, evidently that of a newcomer. "Whut dye say ye seen?"

"A man who walks around the decks every night at two o'clock," piped the lad. "A stranger, nobody knows who he is. Three nights now I seen 'im. So did Bill Allen and Coogan. I don't know where he comes from nor where he goes, but he walks about every night. Yes, he does, I tell you I seen 'im."

"Aw rats!" said a strange voice. "Somebody's been tellin' you ghost stories."

"I dunno about that." A puff of smoke wafted upward and in his mind's eye the captain could see "Chips," the ancient ship's carpenter, sitting with crossed legs and his short, black pipe between his teeth. "Ye never kin tell. Strange things happ'n aboard o' ships, I kin tell ye. I remember oncet in the old *Nancy B.*, a three-masted bark she wuz, from Capetown to Boston with——"

"Got nuthin' to do wit' th' *Estrella*," said the gruff voice. "And I kinda think th' kid might be right. Thought I saw sumthin' t'other night myself."

"Well, who do you think it was?" asked the scornful one with a laugh.



"WHY Dolan, of course." The lad's voice was shrill and clear. "I saw 'im and it looked just like 'im, not his face, of course, was too dark for that, but I mean his figure. And so did Allen see 'im, and Coogan. Didn't you?"

There were two grunts of assent and the boy continued. "He's come back to haunt us, maybe he was thrown over the side, instead of fallin' over. How do we know?"

"Rats!" scoffed the dissenter.

"Then you stay up tonight and see 'im. I dare you. It makes cold shivers go down your back to see 'im parade around the decks. I tell you it is Dolan who went over the side north of—north of—what was it again, Mike?"

"——, north of Watling!"

Captain Bleibtree arose slowly from his chair. His mouth was twitching and the pouches of flesh beneath his small eyes were loose and flabby. The hunted look was again in his eyes and he suddenly felt very tired—and afraid. Again! Even after death, a death which he had witnessed with his own eyes, the spirit of the man he had wronged persisted in holding over his head the threat of vengeance.

Was the shadow of this man, this hatred-maddened creature with a mind crippled by the captain's blow, to darken the remainder of his life as it had darkened the past three years? Captain Bleibtree, in spite of his pusillanimous nature did not believe in ghosts or the supernatural, but he was entirely at a loss to account for the figure resembling Dolan which the sailors had been so certain they had seen.

Sailors' tales must always be received with a wide margin of leeway, he knew, but even so, when three men had said positively that they had seen the same strange form on three consecutive nights he reasoned that there was something to the story that lifted it above a mere forecastle yarn.

The late tragedy was still fresh in his mind, and the solemnity of the night, the sigh of the wind in the rigging, the eerie moonlight that now bathed the surface of the swelling water, the gull that planed and whirled, the enchantment of a night ghastly in its somber beauty, all these lent their aid in furthering the chain of thought started by the sailors' gossip.

He went to his room and threw himself fully clothed on the settee, and after a lapse of some time, during which his distorted fancy ran wild with dread imaginings of ghosts bent on revenge, of icy talons that reached for his throat and vague forms that glided silently by in the darkness, of spectral shapes with lean, tight-skinned jaws and jagged scars, he fell into a restless vision-haunted slumber, and lay, his body tortured by the vagaries of his mind, tossing and writhing in the darkness.



THERE was a feeling of impending tragedy in the air. Overhead the moon shone with a dull splendor but, in the northeast, black clouds were mounting and the trade wind carried a threat of rain.

The gull had sailed off shoreward and the flying-fish were somewhere deep down in the purple depths. There was only the soft lap of water against the sides of the *Estrella del Norte* to break the silence of the night. As the vessel rolled drowsily in the swell her masts and rigging threw weird shadows wavering across the grey decks.

In the semi-darkness of the little wheelhouse, only lighted by the moonbeams that came through the small, round ports, stood a man garbed in boots, oil skin coat and sou'wester.

He was a tall man, and big of frame, but his face, bent low over the dark square of the chart board, upon which there was no chart, was indistinguishable.

His fingers were moving slowly over the smooth surface and his mouth was moving in silent speech. He straightened, sighed heavily, murmured vaguely and moved toward the door.

Outside he circled the house, mounted the port ladder, crossed the bridge, stared with vacant eyes over the side and aft, and then stood shuddering. Of a sudden he turned, and his eyes, wide, glassy, and staring, were filled with horror.

A sprinkle of rain from the passing rain cloud overhead spattered upon his face and hands and mixed with the cold perspiration of fear.

He stepped back and then forward, and with one hand clutching his throat warded off an unseen foe with the other.

"Ah," he gasped. "Again! You! I'll do for you this time, you fiend."

He sprang forward and, still clutching his throat with his left hand, struck viciously at the empty air with his right.

He gave a gruesome imitation of a man fighting a desperate battle for his life, clawing and striking heavy blows with his free hand, which landed upon nothing, all the while cursing, mouthing foul epithets and jabbering an insane mixture of fear and hatred.

The cloud above spilled more of its liquid contents and the man's wet oilskins glistened dully. Still he fought on, half across the bridge, then back to the corner, where his imaginary assailant wrenched him to his knees.

"Let me go," he finally pleaded in spite of the iron fingers that were slowly taking his life. "Let me go! I give in. Do you hear? I shot Jim Mullins, I drowned you—I'm sorry. I was maddened with fear. Let go, Dolan, let go! You're killing me. Stop, man, for ——'s sake stop, d'ya hear? Have pity—have— Ah!"

Through lips covered with foam and blood he screamed hoarsely, then fell writhing to the deck.

When he came to he was spread-eagled upon his back in the center of the bridge, a sailor astride his legs and one upon each arm.

Through half-opened lids he saw the chief officer standing at his feet and just behind him stood the second officer. The mess boy was strutting boastfully in the back ground.

"Didn't I tell you?" the latter was saying exultantly. "Didn't I? I knew there was something wrong. You betcha!"

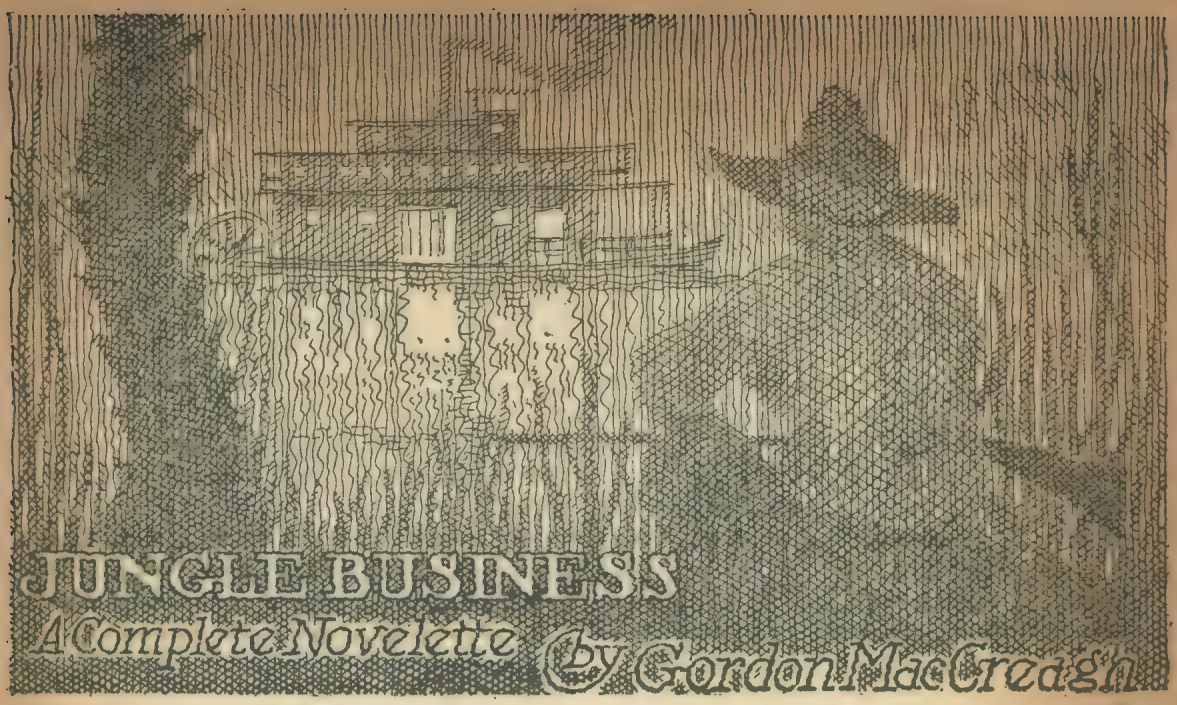
"You were right, lad," answered the second mate. "And you called me just in time. A moment later and we might have been too late."

"A somnambulist," said the chief officer wonderingly.

"More than that," the second mate said with a shake of his head. "A form of mania, caused most likely by Dolan's threats of death, which we have all been hearing about the docks for the last three years, preying upon a guilty conscience. And the strangest part of it is, he throttled a confession from himself."

"Well, you see," said Mr. Nordstrom, "twas the weather, just like north of Watling—and it rained."

Captain Bleibtree gasped, groaned, twisted convulsively and swooned.



Author of "Out of the Jungle," "The Courage Medicine," etc.

WHO calls for Theophilo Da Costa? Who is in trouble now about the upper rivers? Oho, a Senhor Gringo? *Bom*, what can I do for the senhor?

The name is—how? Faraday? Senhor, I desolate myself. You have me in disadvantage. The senhor's illustrious name is no indentification to me.

A letter from your son, who says that I have befriended him, and gives the direction for your reply in the care of my name? Alas, Senhor, that the fact is still no identification. I am Theophilo of the upper rivers, and I have befriended many men's sons—and many men's sons, *Deu graças*, have befriended me. Else I should not be here. Perhaps you would be so good, then, to tell me some detail; some little——

A lad, you say, who came to wrest a fortune out of our wilderness? Yes, there have been many such. And he wrote to you to say that he was doing well but that capital was needed to expand his business against the hostility of competitors. And so you have come to save him from all the manifold dangers of this savage outland of ours that beset him from all sides.

Oho! I know now! Why, that would be none other than the "Pelloroxo—the Red One!" Senhor, it is an honor to me to meet the distinguished father of my friend. But *carramba*, how should we of the upper rivers know that his name might be Faraday or what it might be? Pelloroxo, we called him, the Fire-Head; and what should we know or care besides? For we of the rivers are wanderers of the waterways, standing each man to himself by the things he does. Not like these city people of Manaos who set great store by names and families and by the things their grandfathers have done.

But come with me to a quiet corner, Senhor, where we can talk at ease over our little burnt coffee; and I will give you all the news of this son of yours, whom I have left not so long ago seated behind a tree with a rifle across his knees.



HE CAME, as you have said, to make a fortune out of the wilderness. Wide-eyed, eager, bustling or, as he boasted it, "hustling," asking innumerable questions about the affairs of everybody and expecting everybody to confide in him with as much friendliness as he in them, and demanding ever to be called by his first name.

But it is foolish of me, Senhor, to describe your own son to you. For these extraordinary peculiarities must have made themselves manifest to you long since.

No? Is it possible then that this is a type in your country? For there have been others; though this one had a talent for evoking hostility. Yet there have been

others again who have been whole men—as also your son, Senhor.

Do not mistake. For in the course of time I have deemed him my friend. But it is necessary that I make clear to you how some of these curious ways of his impressed us, the people of Amazonas, in order that you may understand some of the vicissitudes that he brought upon himself.

It is perhaps difficult for you, as it was for him, to realize that he was a foreigner here in a strange city; and that, as such, it behooved him to deport himself circumspectly. But in this matter you *Americanos* are like the *Ingleses*, only not so bad. There was not an action of this lad's that did not jar upon the sensibilities of the residents. Consider, Senhor:

There is no manner of doubt that America of the north is the greatest and most progressive of the Americas. Yet we of the south do not care to have forced upon us the insistent conviction that we are an outlying and a primitive people, and that of all our manners and customs and doings there is not one which is not done better or not done at all in the north.

Yet the lad meant no offense. He spoke only his inborn conviction while conversing with the utmost friendliness. Not a subject was there, but presently he would be able to hold himself no longer and would say, "Well now; in the United States—" And he would proceed to tell all and sundry how much better the thing was done in his country. You understand the irritation, no?

And if his listeners out of courtesy would permit him to continue he would enlarge upon his theme, showing in detail how much better the thing was done in his particular petty township than in all the rest of those United States. A veritable patriotic illness he had.

We of the south have a conception of the north as some forty or so *united* States. Yet this youth divided them into three parts. Those of the two former he spoke with animosity and derision; while some central townlet or other, the name of which nobody had ever heard, he extolled as "God's own country."

I was here in Manaos at the time; and having listened to a two-hour exposition of the excellence of his home town sanitary system as compared with that of Manaos—where it was true we had the yellow fever—I laughed and laid my hand on his shoulder.

"My son," said I, "when the people of this town have driven you from among them; do not lose heart, but come on up to us of the upper rivers; and who knows but that you may be one of the lucky ones for whom fortune waits in this vast Amazonas of ours."

For I said to myself that this lad with his clear eyes and his strong nose and his wide mouth, and with his restless energy, looked to have the makings of a man—if indeed his enthusiasms should outlast the rebuffs which would be his portion here. And the good God knows that this Amazonas of ours needs men to develop its great resources.

But he, he looked at me with a great wonder in his eyes and wanted to know why should the good people of Manaos ever be hostile to him; they were his friends; he liked them and he had no enemies. Yet what could I say? *Meu Deus*, I am no evangelist to explain to youth its shortcomings. So I wished him well and left him, much mystified, to learn in the only school in which youth ever learns, that of experience.

And the first of the lessons came soon enough. In the full publicity of the Teatro Central it occurred. Some foolish picture was showing, depicting the life of your *vaqueiros* in which men rode among cattle and in and out of clapboard villages at a pace never less than a gallop and shot each other with a pistol to each hand.

Now we of the south can never understand this anomaly. How you of the most progressive north can abide such lawlessness at your very doors. And in this matter we think ourselves superior. For in our great plains, where the herds run in their vast thousands, we do not permit murder by the heroic wholesale.

Yet this lad of yours, conversing with a couple of other gringos, his companions, made some remark to the effect that it surprized him, having been in Manaos three months now, not to have witnessed some such exciting lawlessness; and he cited with an amazing twist of pride the number of men killed yearly by pistols in some town or other of yours of equal population to ours.

Whereupon a young hothead of the city sitting behind him, who understood English, as do most of our better class youths, could contain himself no longer; and leaning forward, he tapped the other on the shoulder

and demanded with some asperity whether he thought that Manaos City was such a town of pioneer savagery.

You must remember, Senhor, that Manaos City, while situated indeed at the exact verge of civilization, possesses modern electric lighting and water and tramway systems; a ten story brewery; a two-million-dollar opera house with a capacity of four thousand; and a system of floating docks capable of accommodating the largest ocean liners. So the local patriot's indignation can well be understood. But to his question your lad must needs reply with wonder in his eyes, and somewhat indignant himself at the brusk interruption.

"Why—we, yes. I kinder thought that I'd see some excitement way out here."

Well, *quê carramba*, what happens when youth argues with hot youth? Words make more words; and many words make blows. I have regretted that I was not present to witness that fight. But the tale of it made good telling in the cafés for a week or two.

It began with the interchange of such ineffectual blows as men may deal in the half-dark over the backs of benches, and proceeded then by mutual consent into the passageway between the seats where there was more room. Who struck whom or how hard could not be seen; but in a moment the theater was in an uproar. Women, of course, shrieked—as they do on all occasions, whether of mirth or of fear. Men shouted; some for quiet; some demanding that the belligerents sit down and permit them to see; some calling for lights and the guard.

The fool of an attendant, instead of throwing in the switch, rushed first to separate what he thought might be no more than a little argument. Somebody, whether friend or foe, struck him under the ear, and nobody thereafter seemed to know where the lights might be turned on. The uproar increased. Partizans sprang up from all sides in response to the shouts of our youths and lent impetus to the fray by climbing over the seats to join in.

Your gringos, of course, called for no help, being imbued with your customary arrogant conviction that each one of them could conquer ten foreigners, as you term us in our own country. They fought silently—except that they cursed horribly by the name of God and of the —— as they dealt each blow. Yet others must have come to their assistance; for no three could have stood against the mob.

The thing became an international riot; and it gravitated, of course, down the slope of the dim passageway till the combatants surged into the space of the orchestra and beat each other with the instruments of the musicians who, wretched ones, had no means of escape.

In the meanwhile those who struggled to get out at the upper end by the door hampered the *guardia civil* who struggled to get in. So it was not till fifteen minutes had passed that they finally gained entrance; and then, as is always the case when the law arrives, the rioters ducked this way and that and melted away in the dark; and there remained when light was eventually restored only those who were incapacitated for flight.

One of these was your son, who lay with a dark trickle oozing from his fiery hair. With him another gringo, a blond youth who belonged to a respectably established English house of the city. Three of our lads groaned among the wreckage; and—ho-ho! spice was added to the tale when the policemen extracted from among the wires of the piano the Senhor da Sylvestra, a man of substance and position in the city, who had no right to mix himself up with the brawlings of hot-headed youths.

One result of that affair was an ordinance of the fire guard that all such houses be provided with at least one exit in the rear in addition to the door of entry. The result to your son was what was to be expected. They were taken up, all of them whom the policemen caught, and thrown into the *calabouço* together to reflect upon their foolishness in disturbing the peace.



LATER, in the course of a couple of days or so, there were fines to be paid before the judge and much anguished running about on the part of your harassed consul to get his countryman, the instigator of it all, off with no worse than a wholesome fine.

The youths, what with comforting each other in the lock-up and helping each other with their hurts—and having acquired a certain respect for the weight of each other's blows—became friends. All except the Da Sylvestra. For he was by way of being a pompous man; the wits of the cafés

made sport of his misfortune, inventing many ribald explanations for the manner of his stuffing into the rear of the piano. And what man of conceit will forgive a hurt to his dignity?

For the rest all might have been well for your foolish son, for we of the South, though our own customs are different, do not hold it against your gringos that you are an excitable people and become often boisterous in your behavior. Unlike the Germans and Frenchmen, who are more like ourselves and fall into our customs immediately and with ease.

The city was prepared to look with tolerance upon your Fire-Head. But, *quê louco*, the fool! It was reported of him that the first thought he gave expression to in the *calabouço* was to rejoice that nobody had commenced to fight with pistols. And when asked indignantly whether he thought that our citizens went to their entertainment armed, he said with naive surprize that he thought surely so; and he admitted with a certain bravado that he carried an automatic pistol in a special pocket that was constructed in the rear of all trousers made in the United States.

Senhor, it is just little things like these that rankle. A city that is admittedly of the verge of civilization and which has passed through a period of wild lawlessness during its early building may well develop an extreme sensitiveness about its adherence to law and order. Did not the same spirit rise from time to time among your own pioneer communities, when in their sudden hysteria of virtue they organized committees of vigilance to deal more violently with the breakers of the law than the lawbreakers themselves? You understand the situation, no?

An indication of this was that I found him a few days later in the Café dos Estrangeiros seated at a table, *alone*. Among us it is the custom; when a stranger sits alone, for some one of the residents to approach and request permission to sit while he takes a small coffee or a cigaret, the while he engages the stranger in such small conversation as may come to mind. It is a pleasing little ceremonial indicative of welcome at the hands of the citizens. So it is my observation that when a man sits alone he has given offense. I laughed as I slid into the chair opposite to him and signaled to the *moço* with my two fingers crooked.

"*Com permissão*, Senhor," I said. "We shall drink a little black one together." And observing his glum face, I laughed again and added, "Well, my young friend, you are beginning to learn that not all of these people are your friends, eh?"

He remained silent for a while, sipping moodily and with a wry face at the bitter coffee. Then—

"I don't understand you people," he burst out.

I shrugged.

"No?" I asked. "Is it not yet clear to you that you have offended these good citizens in some manner?"

He remained silent again, stabbing at the thick coffee grounds with his little spoon. After a full minute:

"That's just it," he complained. "I have been engaged in a trifle of a brawl; but I do not see what there is to occasion so much of a fuss. The populace looks at me as if I had stolen something. Even those three who were locked up with me seem to have been frightened away." Silence again. Then a burst of youthful confidence. "Why, in my home town there would have been a whole gang of fellows ready to make friends, and my picture would have been in the local paper."

I was forced to laugh once more.

"True," I said. "Here we do not give honor to mere notoriety for its own sake. But you are right. To many of your people it is not given to understand our people. For them it does not matter. They work in somebody's office and they draw a wage; and presently they go home again—or they stay on and die. But you, you have ambitions. Yet you have been here three months and yet you do not understand that it is not on account of a little brawling that people avoid you. You do not grasp the many little, little reasons for your offense."

And he proceeded immediately to give me further proof of the fact by forcing upon me a cigaret out of his own case. In politeness I took and lighted the thing; and doubtless I made as wry a face over it as he over the bitter coffee. A foul tube it was, stuffed with the sweepings of the tobacco factories and tasting like a mixture of all things that burn. Yet he extolled it to the skies with genuine conviction. And for what reason? Listen.

"A million packages are sold every day," he said. And he added as a final proof of

excellence, "Made in my own home State. I've brought five thousand with me; and —— knows what I shall do when they are gone."

This to me, a native of Brazil, where, while our flavors are strong, we smoke at least pure tobacco. Yet he meant no insult. That sense of superiority of all things that emanated from his own petty corner of the earth was an instinct with him. I rose and left him.

"My son," I said to him. "If that God who shares with you that select little spot in your country where you were born is very good to you, it may be given to you to understand and learn. In the meanwhile remember: When you can live no longer here in Manaos, try once your fortune in the upper rivers before you go back to your heaven. Ask for Theophilo of the upper rivers. It will be a sufficient passport for your safe conduct."

And so I came away upon my own business which took me on that occasion up the Rio Negro and inland into some of the dim, overhung creeks, *igarapes* we call them, which come in above Santa Isabel. Word filtered up to me from time to time about the doings of the Fire-Head; for it had been very swiftly noticed that I had shown a small interest in him; and there were men who worked on the little flat stern-wheel steamer of the *Companha Navigacione*, which came once a month as far as Santa Isabel when the river currents allowed, who were anxious to have my favor.

It appears that he perpetrated no particular enormities. Except that he drove my good friend Vargas, the proprietor of the hotel, to impotent rage by repeating to him upon all occasions the glory of some hotel or other in the north which boasted eight thousand rooms. This barrack, with intimate details of its telegraphs and its elevators and its valets and its cooks of the European nobility, was thorn enough in the proprietor's side. But its very immensity rendered comparison innocuous.

It was when the incurable patriot began to extol the superior system of the little hotel in his own home town that Vargas at last with gnashing teeth begged him either to desist or to go and find some other hotel where he would have less to criticize. Whereupon the young man with an aggrieved air capped the crime by apologizing profusely and saying that he thought the other would be glad to learn pointers about how an up-to-date, modern hotel was conducted.

What the climax was that finally persuaded him, I do not know. Suffice it that word came to me upon one of my creeks that the steamer of the *Companha* had arrived at Santa Isabel, and upon it a gringo whom the captain would have killed except that he had given it out that he came to seek Theophilo Da Costa.

"Oho!" said I to myself. "This must be none other than my Pelloroxo who, with the very best of intentions has exasperated the *commandante* to the point of murder."

And I took two extra men to my *batelão*, and with eight paddles going I sped down to take charge of this responsibility that I had invited. The steamer was always delayed some five or six days, tied up to the bank at Santa Isabel. For the only thing that paid the return journey was the cargo of *castanha*, which you call Brazil nuts. The company had tried desperately for years to establish a schedule.

But, *dientro*, Senhor, it must be admitted that we who live in the hot countries have grown into the habit of taking things easily; and nothing could teach those contractors of the nut gatherers who lived below the very belt of the equator that a few days could make any difference one way or the other. So they straggled in with their cargoes a day, two days, or even a week late. And the steamer must needs sit on the mud by the river bank and await their coming.



SO I found my young man still cheerfully occupying the cubicle which they called a cabin and apparently enjoying the glowering hostility of the captain.

"*Picaro*," I said to him. "Will you never learn? Up here is different to Manaos city. What have you done this time? Has nobody told you that this man is known as a killer in the rivers?"

He had the effrontery to grin.

"So the talk ran," he replied. "But the man laid needless insult upon me."

And he related how, the weather being stifling, he had sat down to the midday meal which was served on the open deck, without his coat; which, he maintained, since he wore a new silk shirt and a collar, would be considered in his home town formal enough in the presence of the seven or eight other

passengers of nondescript appearance who wore, some of them, unclean pajamas and others, no shirt at all but only an open coat over a dingy singlet.

"——!" I exclaimed. "But this is not the custom among us. A coat of some sort one must wear, even though it be only a rag. Man, you were naked."

"How should I know?" he defended. "In any case, if the captain thought I was scandalizing his ship he should have told me in private. Instead, he called a slovenly waiter and whispered certain instructions and had the fellow present me with one of his own not so very clean white duck uniform coats upon a salver."

"Name of a saint! And what then?" I asked quickly.

"Well," he grinned widely again. "I accepted it and bowed to him and put it on —I am learning your customs, you see. And then, at the next meal, I called the same waiter and whispered to him and had him present the captain with a pair of socks."

"*Sanctissimas!*" I shouted. "And you live?"

But I was forced to laugh with him. For, by the Holy Ones, the man had deserved the return. And, knowing that captain, I knew what a tale that would make for the cafés; how my gringo bearded the bad man on his own ground and suffered no penalty.

"The lad begins to strike back when he feels that he is in the right," said I to myself. "Here is good metal for the tempering."

But I called an Indian to take up his pair of great leather satchels and I hurried him away from the boat with speed before I, too, should become embroiled with the enraged captain; and I made him welcome to hammock space in my own *batelão*.

Being late, we ate and slept; and in the morning we talked of plans for the fortune that he was going to wrest out of the wilderness.

"*Então*, here we are," I said to him. "You find yourself at last in the lawless jungle that you thought was Manaos City. For Santa Isabel, as you see, is but a trampled landing place for the steamer and an adobe hut which the owner calls the hotel, and a deserted rubber shed. From here up is our country of the upper rivers where the law is to him who can make it. Here you may live with pistols tied to your thighs in the uncomfortable manner of your compatriots of the central plains. You are now a pioneer."

"Good," said he. "My fathers were pioneers. Here perhaps I shall fit. In Manaos, where I would have been friends with everybody, I met only hostility; which—" he grinned again—"may possibly have been somewhat my own fault. But ——"

"Oho, you have indeed begun to learn!" I said to him; and I clapped him on the shoulder. "But my young friend, let me tell you this: Here in the jungle, where you hope to wrest a fortune, do not hope to be friends with anybody at all; for everybody is striving with all his mind and his heart and his sinew to accomplish the same thing, each in his own way. What way have you in mind to adopt?"

"Let me be accursed if I know," said he. And he sat, swinging his legs from the hammock and frowning in thought.

I, watching his face and his careless confidence, thought that I might use this young man here where there were few people for him to insult. So I made him a complimentary offer which many a youth of the city would have given his soul to accept.

"Good," I said. "I shall give you employment working with me till such time as you know the ropes, and then you may strike out for yourself."

But, *carramba*, he refused the chance as airily as if I had offered him a cigaret.

"No," said he. "I thank you, friend of the jungle places where I must look for no friends. I can not take employment; for in my home town, in an institute for the teaching of business, they taught me an advice for all young men, 'Be your own boss.' So—" he cast about in his mind—"I shall make a business for myself."

Truly the man had a talent for giving offence. Yet he had smilingly called me his friend on top of my warning. And I reflected that it would not be a bad thing to have a youth with his unconquerable confidence and energy allied to me in those upper rivers. So instead of leaving him to his own devices, I decided to help him.

"*Bom*," I said. "You talk as if many varieties of business stand cataloged ready to hand. Yet business *can* be made by such men as are not fools or cowards, else how should we river runners live? Tell me,

then, what is in your mind about a business?"

He showed no hesitation.

"——," he said. "In my travel of six days in that sweating steamer I have observed but one business being carried on—*castanha*. And that business is conducted very badly. There is room for much improvement. Therefore, I shall go into the Brazil nut business."

"*Miravel!*" I was forced to exclaim. "He has put his finger upon it in a single viewing. For twenty years these nut gatherers have continued in the same haphazard manner. Exactly as they did in the old days when the business was a few *batelão* loads; so they do now, though the export is sixty thousand tons. This must be an example of—how do you call it?—hustle?

"But, my young friend, you overlook a matter which is a stumbling block to all your compatriots. This manner of gathering and shipping these nuts has now become established custom: it is *costumbre*. And the man does not live who can in one lifetime alter *costumbre*."

His confidence hardened to the usual stubbornness of one who does not understand the difficulty.

"By golly," he began. "I'll bet I can speed up that——"

But I do not waste time any more in arguing with *Americanos* about the rigidity of established custom among our people. Instead of trying to convince him, I showed him an easier way, a gift of certain information which I had.

"Listen, my confident friend," I told him, "since you speak of nuts, there is an alternative, which may, with the expenditure of much hard work and a little money, be developed to great profit. In these *igarapes*, the creeks that I am having occasion to explore, there exists, within workable distance, *tagua* in great quantities."

Seeing his face remain blank, I explained further.

"The ivory nut, from which in your country they manufacture buttons, and then send catalogs to our merchants advertizing products of genuine ivory. The creeks are not far. Indians are available and friendly; for the *castanha* does not grow there and so these trader fellows have not penetrated. The condition is ideal. Myself I can not use it; since I have other irons to heat and I can not devote the necessary time.

"I do not wish to let any of those low trader men come messing into my water, making trouble with the Indians. So I present this business to you, my Pelloroxo. With it I give my advice out of all my experience and such help as my time may permit. And you shall give me your word over hand clasp to apportion to me a one-third share."

His face expanded with eagerness as he listened, and he interrupted with oaths of the "gum" and the "cripes," to attest that the folks back in the insufferable home town of his would surely call this a God-given opportunity to get into a "new business" and to be "one's own boss"—which things were apparently the religion of that town. But his enthusiasm faded again as he said with mournfulness:

"Sure sounds like the goods. But a new business needs capital; and I have but three hundred dollars."

"*Ouve lhe!* Listen to him!" I shouted, and smote him on the back. "You are here a pioneer, I have told you. Not money, but bowels—and a little sense—does a man need to make a business in a pioneer country. Three hundred dollars is nearly three thousand milreis; and with the half of that you can have built a *batelão* like mine and fill it up with trade goods enough for a year."

His eyes opened with that same look of wonder that had so impressed me at our first meeting in Manaos City; and—

"Gee," he said, "with three hundred dollars back home I couldn't——"

But I clapped my hand over his mouth before he could tell me about his home town.

"Listen, my friend," I told him. "I will instruct you in the rules for making business in our rivers. They are three. The first is: Make friends with the Indians by learning and respecting their customs and superstitions—for they represent your labor. Prate not to them about the superior manner of conduct in your accursed home town. When they say, 'In such a manner are we accustomed to do this thing,' say to them, 'Good. Let us then do it all together and with speed.'

"The second is: Make friends with the *ipagês*, the witch doctors, for they control your labor.

"And the third is: Never lie to either.

For the former will believe your word but once, and the latter will surely find you out."

"Good," said he, "those are simple."

But I still added a warning.

"Simple to learn. But not so easy to remember in all one's dealings, *amigo*. For of all the men who trade these upper rivers there is perhaps but one other than myself who adheres to them—which is why they remain petty traders. Three simple rules; yet those fellows do not heed them. And for you, my Fire-Head, I will add a fourth. Forget that petty townlet which you share with your God in the center State of America. And concede that whole men are born also in the states of the east and of the west. Ay, and even in some of the States of America of the south."

He grinned at me again.

"So I am beginning to find out, my friend of the jungle places," he said.

"Good," said I. "You have learned much. Come then. Let us go to the steamer and purchase from the traveling agent of the house of Araujo Company such trade goods as will be needful for this business in the back creeks."



SO WE went together. And as we stood on the long plank that connected the steamer with the less moist of themud of the adjoining bank, the captain, swelling at the neck, shouted at us from the upper deck.

"What is that man that you bring with you, you Theophilo, sheltering him under the cover of your name to insult me on my own ship?"

I was about to reply as the man deserved when this Fire-Head took the words upon himself and shouted back:

"This is an up-river man, *mio Capitão*, by name Pelloroxo. One who shelters under no man's name but his own."

"*Celestes*," I muttered. "Fool-Head. The man is ripe for quarrel. Be ready to jump into the river."

But the captain was clearly taken aback by this boldness; and he must surely have reflected quickly that this man's reputation was to carry a pistol in that specially constructed pocket of his, even in Manaos City. So instead of making any hostile move, he but grumbled and retreated into his wheel house. I breathed again at the passing of the trouble, and we went on into the ship to the Araujo man and I advised him in the selection of such goods as would be most acceptable to the Indians of the *igarapes*.

Knives and machetes and ax heads and fish hooks and small mirrors and salt. All such things as the Indians most desire. And I told him that I would make out a list for him of their values in terms of trade; for since the Indians understood nothing of cost, it was necessary for him to know how much labor could be bought for each article.

And I added for his own feeding, quinin and medicines and rice and great slabs of dried *pirarucu* fish and lard, to be used when the wild game should fall short. On the top of which he demanded potatoes. But I told him:

"You have seen your last leathery potato and your last musty vegetable on this river steamer. From now on you will eat the *manihot* yam of the Indians."

He made a face, but said nothing. I laughed and reminded him with gusto:

"Wait, my young pioneer, till it shall be your fate—as comes to all of us river men—to eat the stinking *pirarucu*."

And then I selected for him a rifle of the Winchester .44 with five hundred cartridges, which have become so standard in our rivers that they pass for currency. And I advised him further that, while it was against the law, since there was no law in our jungles, the best present that could be made to a chief in the back creeks would be a muzzle-loading gun of one barrel with black powder and shot for its use.

All the things that would be necessary for his subsistence in the jungle I selected for him, and in all things he submitted to my judgment; and we made a great pile of the goods upon the deck and I checked over the list to see that nothing was forgotten and said to him then:

"*Basta*, it is finished. You are outfitted now with all that any man needs in our back creeks."

But he demurred still.

"Will it not be necessary, *amigo*, to carry a pistol in those back creeks?"

"The automatic pistol that you have will suffice," I told him.

But he replied:

"I have no pistol, my good friend. For since they found such fault with me in Manaos and made such a fuss about the

carrying of a pistol, I gave it to another gringo who was traveling back north."

"What is that?" I exclaimed. "What do you tell me? Do you mean to say that when you answered back to that captain you had no pistol in your back pocket?"

His grin was that of an infant without sense or care.

"Nary gun," said he. "But how was *he* to know that?"

"*Celestes*," I grumbled. "A fool like you needs two pistols at the least."

So we bought them. Great pistols of Colt, which are as good currency as the rifles of Winchester; and we called Indians and conveyed the whole mass into the aged rubber shed where I set a man of my own to watch over it.

"Now," I said. "All that you need is a *batelão;* and you are established. But that will take some little time to be built."

But in this matter we were fortunate. With all that pile of goods in the rubber shed it was evident to all the world that a boat would be needed to carry it in. And so in the course of a day or so there came to me a *padrão* of nut gatherers who told me that his partner had been bitten by a *jararaca* while dipping his hand foolishly to draw water, and that his boat was therefore for sale.

So we went to look it over, and found a very satisfactory craft; a *batelão* much like my own, stoutly built of hand-hewn planks of mahogany; some ten meters in length, having the stern half-covered over with a funnel-shaped roof of palm thatch to afford dry accommodation for goods and gear, and hammock room for the owner; amidships a small deck upon which he might recline while directing the craft; and the forward part half-decked with slats of split cane whereon the paddle men would squat, three to each side.

The rogue of a *padrão* immediately asked a gringo price. But the Pelloroxo told him swiftly:

"Name of a ——! What is this? I am an up-river man and the partner of Theophilo."

So the fellow accepted the half and was well satisfied. As was I also; for my own business demanded my time; and I had been wondering how this lad with no experience would be able to make his first approaches to the up-creek Indians without some guidance. Now I would be able to take him up with me and introduce him into the business personally.

He would need only an interpreter who would be his mouth until such time as he could master sufficient of the Geral—which is a very simple language and easily learned —and a temporary paddle crew whom he would dismiss after having established friendly relations with the local Indians.

So I found for him a *piloto*, a reliable man who knew something of the management of a *batelão* in the currents and who could also cook a little in the *batelero* style; and, having spent a long day, we slept. He, for the first time in his own *batelão*, and as pleased as an infant with a new toy. I, satisfied that a profitable day had been spent and that nothing had been omitted. On the very morrow we would start.

A propitious morning. For nothing occurred to occasion delay—which among us of the south is unusual. The Pelloroxo appeared in the formal *Americano* dress for the trip into the wilderness. A shirt of khaki, open at the neck; breeches of cord; high yellow boots. All complete and all new, with one of his new pistols hanging at his hip from a loose belt.

"*Mira qué magnifico!*" I congratulated him as I laughed. And the bystanders who had gathered to see us off murmered approbation.

Collectors of the *castanha* and their *padrãos* they were, with several ox-faced Indians; and they had never seen such magnificence of fashion. Old Tio Romeiro, a *batelero* of forty years' standing in the upper rivers, spat his chew of *ipadu* leaf upon the prow of the new boat for luck and said:

"Let be. Let him persevere till he reaches the creeks; and the Indians will surely think that he is a very great chief; for never have they seen such a white man. And within that time he will have learned from experience that breeches are good when one rides upon a horse and when one stands upright; but for all other purposes in the world they bind at the knee where they sweat and itch like the very cane lice themselves."

But he laughed in turn and told me:

"*Por Deus*, these are what I purchased at great expense in my home town at the advice of the camp-goods dealer who told me that such would be the appropriate costume for Manaos City. So wear them now I must."



WHAT need to relate our petty travel? Nothing of note occurred. In three days we reached the *igarape* Marauiá and, passing into it out of the great river, were lost immediately in another world. For while the Rio Negro at that point is a sea of some four miles wide interspersed with islands, this *igarape* is suddenly a narrow tunnel winding for fifty miles into the very heart of the jungle. Sluggish and dark it is, overhung with great trees which send aerial roots and lianas as thick as a man's body to seek foothold in the lushy ground which never dries even in the dry season.

And while the great black river is silent and empty of all life, here one plunges into all the sounds of the jungle. Monkeys and parrots which one knows to be disporting themselves in the sunlit green far above but which one never sees; the hiss of insects that pass like bullets; the creaking talk of the trees; now and then a long call which one may identify as the cry of one of the larger beasts; and now and then again a wild cry which, in spite of twenty years' experience, one can not place at all. I looked back from my *batelão* and called to Pelloroxo:

"Be afraid, my *gringito*. For from now on you do not see the sun till you come out again with a cargo."

But he laughed.

"Yourself have told me that I am a pioneer, as were my fathers. Why then should I be afraid?"

And he sang as he sat on the thatch roof of his cabin, songs of atrocious tempo and the most lugubrious of sentiment. But in his voice was the careless spirit of his forefathers; the spirit that drove them ever to seek out and take delight in the new places.

In a couple of days we arrived into the country where I had discovered the *tagua* nuts; and there I summoned a council of the jungle chiefs and caused the Pelloroxo to stand before them as my friend who would deal with them even as I had dealt. After which I was compelled to leave him to his own devices, to stand or fall according to the limitations of his own wit and courage and his ability to absorb the many advices that I gave him. For my own business demanded that I return out to the big river and journey yet three days farther up.

It was with some misgiving that I went; for he was new and much in need of experience. Yet, since he would have only Indians to deal with, who are, up there, unspoiled and well-meaning, though lazy by heredity and inclination, I had a certain confidence. But as for him, *carramba*, confidence was the one thing that he lacked least ever since his first arrival in Manaos. So I wished him *á buena dicha*, the best of luck, and went.



FIVE months passed. I, thinking often of this so venturesome gringo, and wondering how he was progressing in his capacity of "his own boss" in our joint "new business," till I was able to journey again to Santa Isabel, and made a point of going up our *igarape* on a tour of inspection.

Paddling and poling up the dark passage, I began to be filled with dismay at seeing no signs of a healthy traffic; lianas cut and water passages cleared and all the marks that canoe traffic will leave. The *igarape* was empty and deserted. Even more so, it seemed to me, than before, when a few Indians passed occasionally to Santa Isabel to exchange feathers for goods.

But it turned out that I was needlessly alarmed. As I began to reach into the *tagua* district on the second day, signs of industry became apparent. The first was a far chopping in the forest.

"*Hau*, one makes a canoe," grunted my paddle men.

Presently we came upon a naked Indian in a dugout canoe with a new machete stuck through a thong at the back of his waist. Him I ordered to come near and account for his possession. He came readily enough, without fear; and said that he worked for the white man, gathering the fruit of the *tagua* tree for some strange purpose of the white man's; and that the white man was different from all other people in that he paid in advance. His machete, therefore, had been come by honestly; for he would fulfil his promise and collect three canoes full of fruit.

"*Qué loucol*" said I to myself. "What a fool system is this? How can one make contract with Indians who do not love work?"

Yet, just round the bend we came upon a small clearing and a palm leaf shelter by the creek edge under which a pile of nuts was accumulating. Other such shelters were passed, and more Indians. And presently, toward the end of the day came the camp of the white man himself.

A house, no less, built of split palm trunks and interlaced with lianas close enough to keep out the vampire bats; a luxurious affair of two rooms, all perched upon stilts a good two meters clear of flood water. A veritable *hacienda.*

The Pelloroxo descended upon me with loud cries and many oaths, and dragged me in immediately to eat; for his code of hospitality was that a friend must be first of all fed. Manatee steak it was; well prepared and tasty; the good effect of which he would have spoiled by thrusting upon me one of his pernicious cigarets.

"I am conserving them with jealous care," he assured me.

But I pushed the foul paper aside and rolled one for myself of pure tobacco in a strip of *miripapo* bark.

"Now tell me all things," I said. "But first of all why, in the name of all the saints, you have not been sending your nuts down to Santa Isabel to ship? You have plenty enough already. This is a very center of unexpected industry."

He threw out his hands.

"My friend," said he. "Our business is held up by the transportation problem. I need here a fleet. The nuts you see are only a part; for I have been voyaging up and down stream and into all the little side creeks; and we have now many little sheds filling steadily up with nuts."

"Miracle!" I grunted. But with skepticism; for I knew those Indians. But he was eager to proceed.

"True, at first there was difficulty," he admitted in answer to my tone. "For these Indians have no desire to labor; and they were skeptical; for some of them had been down to the big river where they had fallen in with the traders; and there was a conviction among them that they would be paid either not at all or cheated in the amount. Till I hit upon the plan of paying in advance—and now we have the Indians of twenty-one villages working busily for us."

I grunted again.

"They may work," said I. "Or rather, promise to work while you dangle a knife or a machete before their eyes. But how busily they will continue to work after you have gone is another question."

"No my good friend, you are mistaken," he insisted against my twenty years' of experience. "They will work and produce; for I have taken the business precaution of insuring our business. Already we have many more tons of nuts than we can send down. What use in sending a *batelão* load or two and a few canoes, which will serve only to attract trader people here before we are well established? No, I will not begin to ship until my fleet is ready."

"*Cremento,* a fleet you talk of, and insurance? How do you propose to collect a fleet?" I demanded.

His grin flashed out. I could see that he was pleased with himself. So much so that he expended another of his precious cigarets.

"High finance," he exulted. "These Indians, as you know, will do anything rather than settle down to the three months labor of hewing a canoe out of a tree trunk; and they struggle along with any ancient leaky thing till it positively falls apart—and then they will bind it up with vines and use it half full of water.

"So I conceived the idea of paying them for building new canoes for themselves. An ax head to each man who would immediately put it to use in hewing out a canoe; with the stipulation only that the canoe be of seven meters in length or more and that the man fill it up three times with nuts. I tell you my friend, presently we shall be able to despatch a fleet of a hundred ships; and in four trips we can collect in the old rubber shed at Santa Isabel a cargo sufficient to charter the whole available space in the steamer; and then those *castanha* gatherers will come to us begging with bribes in their hands——"

But I cut his rhapsody short.

"Hm, fine," I said with sarcasm. "A wonderful dream—if these Indians were people with whom you could make a contract and who could be compelled to hold to their agreements. But they will shortly weary of labor and will make excuses and——"

But he in turn interrupted me.

"No, my friend. They will not."

"Psha," said I. "I know these Indians for twenty years of experience. You can not tell me any new thing about them."

And he, grinning again:

"No new thing indeed. But I have done what you yourself advised. I have learned their customs and their beliefs, and have made friends above all things with the *ipagê*—who is my insurance. In this way it was: The old chief Upanha is old, and the second chief was an enlightened savage. He had been to Santa Isabel often and had

worked rubber in the old days; and he was ambitious to gain the leadership. He used to be my chief opponent in persuading the others that the white men never paid what they promised.

"Now the *ipagé* is friendly to the old chief, who gives him honor and believes in his wizardries. So presently, when a big fever came, the second chief aimed to undermine the *ipagé*'s power by telling all the people that his witchcraft was worthless as a cure; that men either died of fevers or got well of themselves; and that I, the white man would surely back him up in the knowledge that he had learned from the white men.

"*Por Dios*, the decision of a dynasty seemed to be thrust thus suddenly upon my shoulders. So I called the *ipagé* quietly and gave him quinin to make witchcraft with and proclaimed that I, for one, surely believed in his witchcraft to effect a cure for the fever.

"So the wizard triumphed; and the existing dynasty continued; and the pretender to the throne died—I do not know of what. And the *ipagé* is now my stout ally; and his threat is that those Indians who take the white man's pay and do not deliver their contract in full and with speed to the white man who gives honor where honor is due will be fearfully bewitched by him. So, my friend, have no fear. We are well insured. They will deliver."

Basta, it was sufficient. I was convinced. And I took credit to myself that I had rightly judged this young Fire-Head's shrewdness and energy; and I gave credit also to him. I smote him joyfully on the back and told him with some complacence:

"My son, you have learned well the lesson which I told you. Having forgotten your insufferable home town and its useless customs, you have learned the customs of the upper rivers and have been enabled thus to do a great work in organizing the beginnings of a very profitable business. Now tell me, was I not right?"

The eyes of that young ruffian laughed at me with the spirit of the very —— in them.

"You were right in all things," he said, "except that in that institute which taught business in my home town they taught me that the first most important principle upon which a business could be built was—organization."

Diabo lhe maldiça. What can one say to such a fellow? Except curse him while he laughs. Which I did very properly. And he but laughed the more. But I was able to tell him:

"None the less, my so confident friend, you have learned the lesson that you must work with the customs of the people instead of trying to tell them how much better are your own."

To which he, with all humility, agreed. I stayed with him for two days; and in his *batelão* we cruised into the upper reaches of the creek, where I saw for myself how his system of advance payments with the insurance of the *ipagé*'s witchcraft to back up his contracts was working out. And, *carramba*, it was like a system of loans conducted by a bank. Never have I seen so much industry in the upper rivers.

I gave him congratulations and I left him; this time with no uneasiness in my mind. The man had learned and was established. Remained now only the problem of securing a market. His last words to me, shouted after my *batelão* as it was turning the first bend of the creek, were:

"Why not go on down to Manaos and make a contract with some export house to purchase our product? For we can very shortly now guarantee a fixed quantity every month. And that institute in my home town taught me that the second most important principle upon which a business can be conducted is—guaranteed delivery."

I made the sign with the palm of the hand against the thigh and the throat which signifies among us that misfortune is due to him who brags, and went on down to Santa Isabel. But I thought much over his suggestion; and truly it seemed good to me to make some sort of an agreement with some exporting house whereby we might gain some advantage in return for a steady delivery with each month.

So, the monthly steamer being there, I took passage and went. And in Manaos I found very favorable reception; for the price of *tagua* was standing at two and a half milreis per kilo and not much was coming in from the other rivers. Yet the arrangements took up some time; and the steamer went up again and returned before I was ready to go—and then it was delayed while its decrepit engine indulged in one of its periodical breakdowns. So that it went on into two months before I was able to travel

up our *igarape* again; this time with a pleasurable anticipation.



BUT, *meu Deus*, as I traveled I met with a disquiet much greater than on my first trip. For at the first of the palm leaf sheds I found two strange *batelãos* tied up to the bank half full of nuts while the shed was empty. Their masters were away in the woods, the crews told me. But I knew their names. Gross fellows both, with a reputation for high handedness and a browbeating of the trader folk and *bateleros* who congregated at Santa Isabel.

The crew man were sullen and would tell me only that their masters had bought the nuts from the Indians who collected at that point and that they were arranging now for more laborers to work for them.

"*Diabo!*" said I to myself. "What villainy is this? Has the Pelloroxo also been browbeaten by their evil reputation to permit this robbery? Or is he, perhaps, dead up there in the jungle?"

So I passed on with anxiety. But Indians in a new canoe whom I met farther up told me that the white man lived and was well. So I told my paddle men to dip deep and strong so that I might reach the camp by the same evening and receive his explanation from himself.

His joy to see me was as great as his relief; and he recounted to me immediately how those two had sneaked up our creek; and the first that he had known about it was when he received a machete, the same that he had given the Indian down there as payment for his labor. He did not blame the Indian; for those trader men had told him that if he returned the payment he would be free of his contract, and that they would give him another machete and something more besides. But what was he to do about those two men he did not know till I should return; and he had been waiting for me now this full month while they stole our nuts. I looked at him with amazement and considerable disappointment.

"*Sangue Deus*," I growled. "What do you expect to do in such a case? Call for a policeman to protect you?"

"I don't know," he answered with a grave face. "I waited for your coming to find out what was the proper procedure according to the custom of the upper rivers."

"Proper procedure?" I said with sarcasm. "*Carramba*, you come into our peaceful cities carrying a pistol, engaging in rioting, and comporting yourself after the manner of your Wild West beyond the borders of civilization. And now that you are here in pioneer country beyond our borders of law, you became tame and wait to inquire what is the proper procedure of law! *Dientro*, I will show you what is my custom. I shall go down to those two ruffians and shall tell them that I, Theophilo, am interested in this business; and *basta*, they will apologize and withdraw."

But he bit upon his lip and swallowed my scorn.

"No," he insisted with a set face. "If I am to conduct a business in these upper rivers I must attend to this matter myself. I but wanted to know what might be done without antagonizing the whole of Amazonas. Let us say no more, but come in and eat."

So he took me into his stilt house and would say no more on the subject. But he called his *piloto* and gave orders that the *batelão* crew be prepared for an early start the next morning, and he remained in a silent mood till morning came. With the first screaming of the parrots he was up and shouting for his paddle men to jump and go; and he would have gone alone with his silence and his set face. But I insisted on accompanying him, for I know those two men to be cunning as well as treacherous.

They were lolling on the bank beside their *batelãos* when we arrived, for it was the siesta hour. The one, a heavy set man of the same height as the Pelloroxo, but getting stout from easy living; and the other, equally tall, but as lean and stringy as the first was stout; though both their faces were well matched in a furtive sort of truculence.

Upon seeing our *batelão* come round the bend they sprang to their feet, cursing with surprize; for they had flaunted their insolence so long in security that this visit was very unexpected indeed. The stout one made as if to run to his *batelão;* but the other held him by the arm and drew him to himself, and they stood together whispering.

We swung into the bank, and the Pelloroxo sprang out with alacrity.

"Have a care," I warned him as I followed. "For both these fellows have the reputation of carrying weapons, not in open view like yours, but concealed."

But he, paying no attention to me, stalked

close and addressed them in a tone of easy conversation.

"Do you two misborn brigands fight with pistols or with knives or how?"

This bluntness from one whom they had been regarding as a man easy to rob took them aback; but the lean one quickly recovered his surly self-possession and addressed himself to me.

"Have you, Theophilo, any interest with this gringo or with his fate?"

It was a leading question, and I knew that upon my answer would depend their action. But my mind was quickly made up.

"No," I said. "He handles his own affair by himself."

The Pelloroxo, while watching the others like a jaguar, still found time to flash a glance at me and to murmur, "Thanks, *amigo*." During which interval the other two looked at one another and laughed as if some joke were about to befall. Then the leaner of the two composed his features to that expression of ferocity which fellows of his class employ for the purpose of intimidation.

"Then," said he with contempt, "we do not care how we fight or when."



HE delivered it as an ultimatum, and stood as if expecting some argument in reply. But this gringo of mine was ever restless for action rather then talk. Hardly were the words out of the fellow's mouth when the Pelloroxo rushed at him with the suddenness of a peccary boar. With his fist he hit him once underneath the eye, so that the blood spurted under the blow. Again, before the man could recover his balance and while the scream of rage was yet in his throat, he hit him with the other fist a terrible blow in the belly so that the scream was choked to a groan and the man leaned forward with eyes turning back in his head and hands clutching at his middle. A third time with incredible speed he struck him upon the ear as he thus staggered, and completed his fall down the slope of the bank into the creek.

"*Braval*" I shouted with excitement. And as I shouted, a pistol sounded and I heard the ball hum and clatter the next instant in the jungle beyond the creek. Thanking the holy saints in the same breath for that pistol shooting was an inaccurate sport at best, I turned my head and saw the other fellow running to shelter behind a tree and turning to shoot again as he ran.

Even as I threw myself upon the ground I saw the example of your national pistol play. As swiftly as do your *vaqueros* in the motion pictures, the Pelloroxo snatched his pistol from the holster which hung at his loose belt of cartridges and fired without raising to aim. The man's arm flew away and upward from his side. The pistol dropped from his hand. He screamed once and lurched up against his tree where he supported himself like one drunk, and like a drunkard began to grow weak at the knees and sag to the ground.

Then Pelloroxo turned with ready pistol to attend once more to the other whom he had knocked into the creek. But that blow upon the ear, coming in addition to the terrible assault upon his stomach, had rendered him unconscious. He lay in the water inert while the Indians from the *batelãos* chattered in affright and pointed at the swirl and splash of the black water all round him.

"Mercy of ——!" I cried. "The *piranha!*" And I rushed to haul the wretched man forth, shouting upon the Indians to help.

By the fellow's great good fortune this affair had taken only seconds to accomplish. Had it been a protracted battle his plight would have been a pitiable one. As it was, a veritable school of those ferocious fishes must have been nearby when he fell; for he bled from half a dozen places already on his unprotected hands and face. Clean round holes as big as a vest button they were, showing that his luck was good again in that they had been young fish.

By this time the Indians had found their wits and were ready to help. Already a couple of them were chewing great wads of the *tamaquaré* leaf to apply as dressing. So I left them to bind him up as best they might and turned once more to look for my friend. He was leaning over the other fellow, shaking him by the shoulder.

"He is not hurt," he said to me with disgust. "I shot him only in the forearm."

And forthwith, by kicking him vigorously on the nether pants, he forced the man to his feet, and so held him, clutching at his arm and scowling.

"Now," he ordered, "tell your Indians immediately to unload those nuts back into my shed here. Make speed." And he

thrust him toward his *batelão* and pointed him to his work with the pistol.

"*Miravel*," I said. "This is the first good thing that I have seen come out of that home town of yours—the miraculous pistol play of you *Americanos*."

At that he laughed at me with loud merriment.

"My friend," said he. "In my home town there is very probably no man who has ever fired a pistol in his life—as neither did I before I came here."

"But—but, name of a saint," I began.

But he interrupted me, jeering.

"But—but, am I not learning how to conduct a business here beyond the borders of the law? Twice have I sent down to Santa Isabel to the steamer and purchased I do not know how many kilos of cartridges. I have been practising the ways of your Amazonas, my friend; I have been practising. Yet I will tell you—" he laughed again—"I aimed to hit that man anywhere between his belt and his hat. But it is good for my reputation that *he* does not know that."

"*Carramba*, rest on that reputation," said I. "The tale will spread. You will never have to shoot again."

He shrugged and turned to see that his orders about the nuts were being carried out. Then he beckoned to an Indian who stood watching all these things with a scared countenance. The man came in answer to the summons and at five paces distance prostrated himself upon the ground with his face between his folded hands. The Pelloroxo spoke to him sternly in the *Geral*:

"Tutua, descendant of a black spider-monkey, you are a fool. You will return immediately to these men who are half white their machete; and you will come to-morrow to my place and will receive again that which I gave you—for which you will now deliver four canoe-loads of nuts."

The man raised himself, and laying his crossed fingers against his forehead, answered:

"What my white chief says, will be. Only, O *Kariwa*, those men gave me no machete, they only said they would give."

The Pelloroxo threw back his head and laughed with much enjoyment.

"Good," said he. "That tale will spread. Let them rest on that reputation." Then to the Indian, "Go. And take an offering with you to the *ipagé*, that he may remove his curse from you." And to me, "Amigo, we have time to smoke a cigaret while we watch these little thieves unload."

But I left him to enjoy his tube of refuse and busied myself with seeing that the last of our nuts was well and truly delivered out of the bottoms of those *batelãos*. At last it was finished; and the men stood denuded of their stolen plunder and sullenly submissive. Pitiable to look at; the one with his arm rudely bandaged and the other unrecognizable through the poultices of chewed leaf where the fish had taken pieces out of him. The Pelloroxo stood smiling at them with a hard mouth. Then he gave them their orders.

"Listen, you two. You will go from here quickly; and you will remember for your selves, and tell it also to all the rest of your kind, that I, Pelloroxo, the up-river man, have drawn a line across the mouth of this *igarape* to mark it as my water. That is all, and it is easy to remember. Now go."

They gave no argument; but climbed into their *batelãos*, scowling and silent. The Indians pushed off without the customary chant; and in less than a minute the dimness beyond the next bend had swallowed them. I laid my hand on my partner's shoulder.

"*Amigo*," said I. "That was well done. An improvement even on our custom. And for some of those things that I said yesterday when I came, I give you my apology."

He grinned.

"They are forgotten, good friend of the upper jungle," said he. "Have a cigaret."



I DID not go back with him to his camp. It was quite clear to me that he had well absorbed all the knowledge necessary for the conducting of an up-river man's business—at all events in the jungle. Santa Isabel would be another problem; for there I could forsee conflict with men not so simple and well-meaning as Indians of the back creeks. But there was growing in me a very satisfying confidence in this Pelloroxo since he had begun to understand that custom was a thing that people adhered to slavishly whether in our country or in his.

So I went back from that place and up to my own water to attend to my business; once again with an easy mind free of misgiving. His parting word to me was:

"If you listen carefully from up your creek you will hear the howl that those

trader men raise when I grab all the available cargo space on that river steamer with our first shipment. Listen well; for the fleet is almost ready."

Which promise he kept within the month. With a hundred and seventeen canoes he descended one day upon Santa Isabel and piled his cargo into the old rubber shed. And nobody knew anything about his preparations; for the port, between steamer visits, is but an empty landing stage and nobody is there but the half-breed with his family who keeps the adobe hut which he magnificently calls the hotel.

The Pelloroxo wasted no time; but made the shed his home like a true river man by linging his hammock between two posts, and quickly despatched his fleet to bring down another load. Six cargoes he brought in all; and when the steamer finally wheezed up to the landing stage he sat ready. He went on board and greeted the captain.

"*Hola, mio Capitão.* A quick return voyage for you this time; for I have a cargo all prepared for you."

The captain was not one to forget. He offered no open hostility; but he growled that he would carry no cargo for the gringo. The latter laughed easily.

"But surely, my *Commandante.* I have been on the river now for many months and I have learned many of the river ways. I know the rules of the *Companha.* You must take the first cargo that comes."

As indeed was the fact. For there used to be much wrangling, and not a little blood letting, among those *castanha* gatherers over whose cargo should be given preference when the boat was full. On one occasion, between the lot of them, they contrived in their rioting to set fire to the boat. So the *Companha* instituted a rule of first come, first served—and saved, incidentally, many days delay thereby. Though, as I have said, delay was plenty enough; for nothing could take away from those indolent fellows the hope that cargo space would not still be available after four or five days.

The rule, of course, was absolute, and the captain was compelled to recognize it. He glowered at the complacent gringo for a moment and then thought better of it and shrugged. He admitted the rule and said that, *bom*, he would be ready to begin loading cargo as soon as he should have done this thing and that thing connected with the management of his ship. But his eyes roved far up the stretches of the river and down again as he spoke. The Pelloroxo laughed again. In truth, tact was one thing that he very certainly had not learned. He might have gained his point with more circumspection. But he told the captain:

"No no, *mio Capitão.* I am no longer so much of a fool as I used to be. I know very well that if a single *batelão* should come alongside in the interval you would proceed to unload that one, and then another and then any others that might keep arriving; and you would claim that you took them in rotation. By no means am I such a fool. No, you will give me just one tally clerk, and my own Indians will load into your hold."

At this all the ferocity of the captain's nature blazed forth; and for a long half minute—so the Araujo agent who witnessed it, told me—he thought that violence would ensue; and he made for the shelter of his cabin storeroom. But it turned out as I had prophesied. The captain had very evidently heard the tale of that shooting—doubtless exaggerated in order that the teller's own honor might not be lowered. So his rage passed no farther than his eyes. The fire died in them and he covered their confusion with the lids. Then he shrugged and turned to spit over the rail. That was all.

"I thank you, *mio Capitão,*" said the Pelloroxo. And he went to the lower deck and gave his orders to the tally clerk.

High-handed no doubt. But, as he told me himself later, it was urgently necessary; for his canoe men had told him as long as two days back that one of the *castanha padrãos* was waiting at his *sitio* but half a day's journey up river with three *batelãos* and some dozen canoes, taking things easy till he might come down and meet all his friends for the pleasant monthly carouse.

And within the same day he came; and on his heels others began to drift in from up-river and down-river with their *batelãos* and canoes; and the howl of dismay which went up when they found that all the available cargo space was taken was an ational calamity. They appealed to the captain to give them at least the half of the space; to apportion it out according to each man's offering; and they suggested absurdly that their own men would unload the cargo that was already stowed without expense or delay.

But that was out of the question, of course. Much as the captain would have liked to favor them against the gringo who had so cheerfully flouted him, he dared not openly break the rule. So the discomfited *castanha* traders stood about in groups and grumbled and asked each other what might be done in the matter. The answer of course was, nothing. They had come late as usual; and he who had come first with his business had been first served.

What is the usual outcome in such a situation? In a crowd of some forty or fifty rough fellows of no very great intelligence it is inevitable that anger should turn against the foreigner. Somebody started a murmur, and it was not long before the general grumble was against the accursed gringo who had outmaneuvered them.

Somebody started the suggestion, and it was a matter of only a few minutes before there was a concerted move to go and interview this gringo. The thing was very nearly ready to become a mob. It remained only for somebody to start the suggestion about what to do with the gringo. And that suggestion would devolve naturally out of the heated words which would be exchanged at that interview. So the crowd, with much loud talking, moved toward the old rubber shed.

They found the gringo swinging in his hammock and kicking his heels. They stood about hesitant, waiting for somebody to begin that argument. The gringo looked at them never once. He was deeply engrossed in playing with his pistol, rolling it in a curious manner round his finger through the trigger guard so that the butt swung into the palm of his hand with a soft and satisfactory slap.

He spoke no word to the crowd; and no man in the crowd quite liked to start speaking to him; for the national shooting propensity of you *Americanos* was well known to all of them and the story of the shooting of that particular pistol had very wholesomely spread. It followed thus that there was no argument of heated words. Therefore nobody started the suggestion of what to do with the gringo, the crowd never became a mob at all. Instead, it went softly away to attend to other business.

But the enmity of the thing remained. For this I did not blame the Pelloroxo this time. It was no fault of his forcing that home town annoyance down the throats of our people. It was but the natural penalty that the foreigner must always pay for his cleverness. None the less, he had very thoroughly antagonized the whole of our up-river community. A most unfortunate thing when one wishes to conduct a business in that community.

I was much perturbed when I heard of it. But, *diabo, qué facer?* There was nothing that could be done about the thing. It seemed to be his fate to antagonize people. But it is my observation that business is antagonism; and it takes much skill to conduct a business and not make enemies.

And, by the very ——'s ill luck, just when the business was starting to stand on its feet the effect of all these antagonisms accumulated upon our Pelloroxo all in a heap. His very first success was the invitation that drew the most powerful opposition upon himself.

That shipment, upon its arrival in Manaos, created a stir. *Tagua*, high-grade and in quantity! That called for attention. For no other was coming in from the Rio Negro side at all and the price was high. If the stuff could be collected by the shipload there was money to be made. So reasoned the merchants of the town, being entirely ignorant of the astute organization that lay behind that load.

An old enemy weighted the matter in his mind and decided to take action. No other than Da Sylvestra, the pompous fellow who had got mixed up in that theater riot. Here was a chance to invest some money to the purpose of making a profit and paying off a debt in a very pleasant manner. So on the very next return steamer he came up to Santa Isabel himself.



NEARLY a month had passed, and the Pelloroxo was, of course, waiting with his rubber shed full of *tagua*. The *castanha* men should have learned their lesson by this time. But it takes more than one lesson to teach a man the value of time; and even then, having learned that value, to know how to speed up his little organization of jungle workers who had been dilatory all their lives. Only a few of them, therefore, were ready. Room enough in the steamer's hold for all.

The Pelloroxo stepped on board to go through the formality of arranging for his loading. But the captain grinned a surly

reply to his greeting and referred him to Da Sylvestra. That gentleman lounged in a hammock strung from cabin to deck rail so that all who passed had to stoop under his ropes. He smoked a good cigar and lifted one eyelid at the gringo, who stated civilly enough that the captain had passed him on to talk about the shipment of his goods. But Da Sylvestra threw out his hands, palms uppermost, and smiled as he fired his shot.

"I am desolate," said he. "But I have chartered the entire space for the return trip for my business."

"So?" said the Pelloroxo, wondering swiftly what this move might mean. "You are going into the *castanha* business?"

"But no," said the other, "into *tagua*."

Here was the direct challenge. The Pelloroxo rose to it immediately.

"I am not selling my *tagua* to you," said he. "And there is no other."

Da Sylvestra shrugged.

"There is *tagua* in the back creeks, and experienced nut gatherers are here in plenty."

So! That was the plan? The Pelloroxo understood now. But he was in a position to grin as he replied.

"True Senhor, there is *tagua* in my water. My water extends back for fifty miles into the jungle. How many Indians live in its back reaches, I do not know; for I have never had time to explore. But four hundred Indians under their chiefs and *ipagês* who are my friends, work for me. Believe me, then, when I tell you, Senhor Da Sylvestra; these expert nut gatherers of Santa Isabel will not enter into a war with my Indians."

He waited to let the reflection soak in for a few moments, and then added:

"You are a business man, Senhor. Therefore, I will make you a business offer: I will buy your charter from you for the half of what you paid for it."

With that he left him and came away to his own *batelão*. He spoke his insulting offer boldly; but no sooner was he away than he sent swift canoes to carry messages; one to the *ipagé* at his camp, and one to me. Then he sat down to make such preparations as he might and to wait.

Da Sylvestra was left to gnash upon the end of his cigar and to exercise his wits for the saving of his charter money. He sent for such of the nut *padrãos* as were there to consult with them. But they shrugged and threw out their hands.

"He is a bad man, that gringo," they said. "And he has well trained his Indians by some ——'s means of his own. It is true what he says; they will surely fight for him; as ours—curses upon them—will not."

So Da Sylvestra thought angrily some more, and then said cunningly:

"*Bom*, the man is your enemy as well as mine. You know what may be done here and what may not. But I tell you this; and let it be known to all your friends who arrive; that I will pay the Manaos price, two and a half milreis per kilo, for *tagua* delivered here at Santa Isabel."

That was a cunning trick, and a bribe indeed to urge those fellows to desperate measures. For the best that they could get for their *castanha* was less than one and a half. *Então*, what would be the inevitable happening?

The Pelloroxo, sleeping in his *batelão*, was awakened by one of his Indians to listen to a noise up at the rubber shed. He rolled out of his hammock and stole up to investigate. But silently as he went, as he approached the shed, a pistol was fired out of the darkness and a ball coughed out over his head toward the black river. Happily, as I have said, pistol shooting is not so popular a pastime among us as it is with you of the north, and we have no experts.

The Pelloroxo fell to the ground and lay waiting in uncertainty; for only a fool will walk into what he doesn't know in the darkness. But those others lacked the courage to defend their position of advantage against that pistol of which they had heard so much. They fled into the night; and the Pelloroxo, when he called for a light, found some dozen or so big sacks filled with his *tagua* nuts ready to be taken away.

Petty thievery was what he had hardly expected. But that was not a matter to be greatly exercised about. He sent an Indian to fetch his hammock. He would sleep in the shed and put a stop to that sort of thing. But there were men among the back creek *padrãos* who were arriving now with every hour of the night, who would risk much for the price that Da Sylvestra offered—provided that the risk were not too great.

As the Pelloroxo was tying his hammock ropes, another shot came out of the darkness. This time he jerked his own pistol

loose and fired at the flash; and though he missed in the dark, he heard the startled squeal of the man as the bullet must have passed very close to his head. That would hold venturesome snipers for a while. But needless risk is foolish. The Pelloroxo called his men to scoop him a pit in the top of his pile of nuts; and in that fortress he spent the night on guard.

With the coming of morning his cargo was still intact. But the light disclosed a string of *batelãos* straining in the stiff current of that place against their head ropes tied to stakes. The more fortunate early comers nestled along the outer side of the steamer. Though not more than a half dozen or so; for the captain would not allow too great a weight to attach itself to the strain against his own cable which was bent round a stout *paxiuba* palm.

The owners stood about in groups or busied themselves with their boats; all elaborately unconcerned with the doings of the lone foreigner. Yet all eyes shot furtive glances at him and heads turned to look after he had passed. A veritable camp had risen over night, and all of it was hostile to him.

What could he do? He could not accuse this man or that one at random of coming in the night and attempting to steal his nuts. So, as he passed among them, he took the cue to pretend that he had no suspicions against any man. He greeted those whom he knew as he went about his business, and showed an unconcern as great as anybody's.

By daylight he felt safe; for nobody would care to make an issue against that very wholesome reputation of his shooting. And the day passed without trouble, of course. But that night was a different matter again.

More of the back creek *padrãos* had arrived, and among them were bold spirits who had to learn by experience. Attempts to steal nuts, more or less desperate, were made all through the night. Had it not been for the fortunate convenience of the fortress within the great pile of nuts who can tell what ill chance might not have happened? For the shot of even the poorest sniper in the dark might speed true.

This thing could not go on. So the Pelloroxo with the next morning bestirred himself betimes and stalked down to the steamer, both pistols swinging very much in evidence, to hold a parley with Da Sylvestra. But that crafty one, pretending to be still full of sleep in his hammock, snarled from the upper deck that he was not in a mood to parley just now. After taking his morning coffee he would talk.

So the Pelloroxo, poor innocent, returned to his watch and sat down to wait without thought of treachery. Had I been there I could not have been so easily hoodwinked. For I have experience of some of those business men of ours. It would have been clear to me that Da Sylvestra played only for time to plan some new line of assault; since it must have been clear to him that his paltry thought of bribing others to claw the nuts out of the fire for him was not so successful as he had hoped against the existing respect for the gringo's pistols. He utilized his time, of course, as well as any other cunning fellow might. The plan was simple He collected a gang.

The senhor must not misunderstand me in thinking that all those *bateleros* who gather monthly at Santa Isabel are scoundrels. Most of them are good fellows enough; and some of the best have even the makings of a good up-river man. Antagonistic to the gringo who usurped their trade they might well be, as is natural; but the most of them would not stoop to regular villainy.

Yet in such a gathering of rough men there are always enough who will undertake much for money. Da Sylvestra gathered some half dozen such round himself and then sent a message to the Pelloroxo to say that he was ready to talk. The latter walked down to the steamer without suspicion. Da Sylvestra himself came down the gang plank to meet him on the bank where his hirelings lounged with unconcern. It was all so simple. And like many a simple plan, it worked without a hitch.

Da Sylvestra proffered his hand in greeting. The Pelloroxo accepted it. Da Sylvestra gripped that dangerous right hand fast; and on the instant the rest leaped upon the dupe.

What chance had he to struggle against half a dozen? He was quickly bound and laid helpless; and then at last Da Sylvestra felt that he could afford himself the luxury of the customary sneers that men of small mind heap upon their adversaries when helpless.

"Fool. You thought to pit your feeble wits against *me?*" and so forth.

Then, accompanied by much laughter, those hired bravos called upon their Indians to invade the rubber shed and load all their victim's *tagua* into the waiting hold of the steamer. When every last nut had been removed, they took the Pelloroxo's pistols away from him, retreated onto the steamer, and withdrew the gang plank. Then an Indian was ordered to loosen his bonds and they, from their safety, shouted to him with jeers that it would be good for his health to keep out of sight and rifle shot.

A good coup and perfectly successful. The Pelloroxo was left with no alternative but to obey. One can not single-handed climb the side of an iron steamer against rifle fire. And some of those fellows from the security of the steamer deck would surely have fired had he attempted any such insanity. So the Pelloroxo showed wisdom in going away from there and retiring to his own *batelão* to plan whatever he might.



AND then I arrived. The Pelloroxo was, of course, raging. As was I also as soon as I heard the full tale. But while I was furious and unable to contain myself, his was a colder anger. He sat with a hard face and narrow eyes and asked me first:

"What is now the custom? What may be done without antagonizing yet further the whole community? And tell me, just how far is this place from the law? It seems to me very far indeed."

And I said:

"Death of a thousand saints! It is six long days steamer journey from the law—and that is far enough. What may be done is to collect all our Indians and to make a war upon him and all the rest of this bribed community who are your enemies already. What are they? A city man and some fifty *bateleros*. They are nothing. We can summon half a thousand."

But his was the cooler judgment.

"No," he said. "It is a bad thing to try and do business in the middle of an enemy community. And besides, they are not nearly so many. For—" he smiled with tight lips and tapped me with emphasis on the knee—"look you, my friend. His own cunning has turned against him. For of the fifty *bateleros*, how many of them are any the better off? He has filled up the hold with my *tagua* nuts and they are left still without cargo space for their product. Our enemies then are not fifty, but six; the half dozen who have profited by his pay."

"*Valgame Dous!*" I swore. For it was true. Those deserted ones would at least be neutral. "*Então*, it is enough," I said. "We are two; and with your *batelão* crew and mine we have twelve men. Sufficient. We will start a private war immediately. We can not go down to the open river bank against their rifles. But from the shelter of the jungle we can pick them off at our ease and with perfect security bring them to terms."

But again he shook his head.

"Not so good, *amigo*. I have been thinking this thing over this few hours ahead of you—and this bushwhacking does not appeal to me. In any case, what we do we must do quickly. For consider. They have nothing to wait for now. The captain will soon get up steam, and they will be gone, laughing at our helplessness."

"——!" That was so. I was taken aback. "*Carramba*, what then?"

He leaned over toward me and lowered his voice; for other *batelãos* were tied up near us; and, neutral or no, who knows who might carry a tale?

"In these hours I have been thinking of a plan," he told me with caution, "and that is why I asked you how far was this place from the law. Consider then. You know how the current swings from this place?"

Assuredly I knew. It was a stiff four-mile current, and it swung round the shoulder of that landing place and cut diagonally across the wide breadth of the river, where it split some two miles down over the sand spit at the head of Peccary Island. Many a time have I been put to it, driving my men to hard paddling, to avoid being washed ashore there. The Pelloroxo fixed his gaze upon me with narrow eyes.

"What would happen?" said he. "If we were to cut the steamer's cable before they could get up steam?"

I caught at my breath; for I could foresee the result. But in the next instant I told him:

"You can never cut it. They would fill you with rifle balls from the deck before you could swing a machete once."

He shrugged and grinned at last like he was wont.

"With a machete, never," he agreed. "But with a rifle?"

"*Sanctissimas!* Can you?" I demanded.

He shrugged again.

"Why not, my friend? And so can you. Consider. We do not shoot at half a mile. From the close shelter of the adobe hotel we command a clear view of that *paxiuba* palm to which the cable is fastened; and we can take our leisure. Not in one shot may we succeed; nor in ten. But why not in fifty? While I shoot—or you, it does not matter—the other will prevent interference. And who will interfere? Our enemies are on the steamer, as surely marooned from the open bank as are we; and why should these others, neutrals, intrude themselves?"

Picaro! The lad was right. It was no trick at all. For the first time I was able to laugh. I said no word, but stepped from his *batelão* into mine to fetch my rifle with many shells. His own was ready. So we went without more ado to the adobe hut. The proprietor knew me of old; and with him I made no bones. I told him simply that we proposed to use his house for a little while for our private purpose and that he would favor me by getting out swiftly and telling all those trader fellows that I, Theophilo, and my friend the Pelloroxo, would be engaged in a little business in which we desired no interference. *Basta*, that was all.

Without question he left us. And the Pelloroxo, laughing grimly, took a *poncho* from the bed and spread it on the dirt floor before the doorway. Then he lay down confidently on his belly and snuggled himself to take an easy aim.

"Bet you I hit it first crack," said he.

But he lost. I could see in the clear water beyond, against which the cable stood out stiff and black, that the ball had flown high. He called softly on the name of the —— after the manner of you gringos and tried again. This time was better. I saw a thin spurt of dust; and, after its passing, a little frayed edge of cord stood up against the light some two feet from the palm trunk.

"*Braval*" I shouted. "I must join in this good sport."

But already footsteps were running to see what the shooting was about. I stepped quickly to the door to stand guard; and to those *bateleros* who came I said sternly that this was entirely a private matter to which I and my friend were attending ourselves. They offered no interference. But stood only, wondering. The Pelloroxo took no notice of them; but continued calmly to shoot from within the hut. I was flattered at his confidence in me. Presently another little puff of dust flew from the cable; and then those others understood. But beyond a gasp of wonder and a thousand questions, they made no move to annoy me.

"*Por Diabo*," said one. "This will be a merry surprize to that stiff-necked captain."

And another:

"To that Sylvestra *bandido*, too. I will wager you, friend João, that he cuts it in ten shots."

"I will stake a good machete against that," said the first.

So it was clear to me and a relief to my anxiety that these men bore no particular affection for that gang of ruffians who had once again preempted the steamer's hold. Others of them took sides in the wagering and added to the play; and thereafter they cursed or cheered according as the shots went. I was able to turn my attention to possible interference from the steamer.

As yet those on board knew nothing of the merry play, beyond wondering perhaps what all that steady shooting was about. But I took the precaution of slipping out of the hut and taking up a sheltered position in the nearby bushes from where I could command the deck if need should arise. To those who watched and wagered on the exciting sport I said:

"Hola, there. Go one of you and warn your friends to stand clear of that cable; for this will not last long now, and when it parts it will snap back like a watch spring."



BUT I was still speaking when an uproar suddenly arose on the steamer. Either they had felt some vibration of the striking shots transmitted along the cable, or somebody friendly disposed had given a warning. There was a shouting and much aimless scurrying; till presently somebody thought to run out the gang plank, while impatient men with rifles waited fiercely to cross over and put a stop to the menace.

Here was where the tables of surprize were to be turned upon that crew of bandits. I laughed, and fired a shot that rang like a cracked gong upon the plates of the steamer right at the feet of the men who handled the plank. Lead must have spattered into the face of one of them; for he yelled and leaped up, to fall and roll with his hands over his

eyes. The rest yelled, too, with alarm and leaped away from the plank, letting it go in their haste; and it slipped from the deck and trailed alongside by its rope.

That put a stop to that effort for a while. Men ran about again in a frenzy and shouted orders at each other, each urging the rest to do something while he himself scurried for sheltered position. Some of the hired bravos fired shots in the general direction of our sound. But I laughed again. They could see nothing at all to shoot at. We were safe. I called to the Pelloroxo to take it easy; I could hold them. And he answered cheerfully:

"Righto. Hold them just a minute yet."

I fired again, as a reminder to the venturesome ones, and hoping besides to puncture the boiler, the round top of which protruded from the middle of the lower deck. But in this I failed. And then, suddenly, before I was well aware of it, the steamer gave a great heave, as if struck a heavy blow. A confusion of shouts came from the adobe hut; and a great serpent of cable lashed back hissing and coiled itself about the boat's bows.

I leaped up to shout with the rest—and then ducked down again in haste; for one of the bravos still retained presence of mind enough to fire at me. But that was the last. After that all was confusion and cursing; calling upon the name of —— and of all the patron saints.

The steamer's bows slowly swung away from the bank as the current got beneath it. Faster it swung and faster as the strong outer current got its grip. From the farther side of the steamer arose more shouting and imprecations as those *bateleros* who had made fast to the favorable position cast off and paddled furiously to get out of the way.

On its stern, as on a pivot against the mud, the steamer swung in a grand arc till the bow had passed the middle point. Then slowly the stern, too, left the bank and swung free, and the boat was in the full grip of the current. Decrepit and rusted and lacking paint though the thing was, it looked almost majestic as it drifted off without steam, swinging and waltzing to the whim of the currents.

Round the shoulder of the landing place it floated; and the crowd followed along the bank; some shouting futile advice to those who hung helplessly over the rail; some running aimlessly like ants, as if they might accomplish something; some laughing, quite the most of them laughing, and all eager to see the outcome. It was a *fiesta*. So much entertainment had never been furnished at Santa Isabel before.

But the outcome was sure, as every *batelero* knew. The steamer went with the current, down stream and diagonally across; and there, two miles down and two hundred meters from the shore, the sand spit of the Peccary waited.

In less than half an hour came the crash. Sooner, indeed, than any one had expected; for the dry land was still quite a distance away, and I for one had never suspected that the shallows of the spit extended so far out. Yet, crash, is not the right word; for that was no hard landing. The boat, driving three-quarters on, was seen to lurch once, stagger and halt apparently in its stride; then its momentum seized it, and it ground slowly on to a stop, sending a veritable tidal wave before it to scare the sand crabs.

Well aground—and lucky at that. For the good Lord he knows why He made a sand spit at that splitting of waters where there should have been bare rocks as at the head of the other islands lower down. Some curious shifting of the undersurface currents doubtless caused it, and thereby the life of the ship was saved. For beyond a slight list, it seemed to be otherwise unhurt.

From the crowd on the bank came a loud, "Aa-ah!" as the boat remained stationary and did not swing off to float on to sure destruction on some one or other of the lower islands. With the loosening of the tension came time for comment. Much of it was ribald; much, jesting; and all was careless. No man in that crowd had any particular stake in the fate of that steamer. They stood about for some time to see what further interest might happen. But nothing did. The shouting and the confusion died down on the steamer; and presently it was apparent from the furious smoke issuing from the funnel that they were getting up steam.

"So!" said some. "She is unhurt. They will pull off and proceed."

So those who had business to attend to gradually went away. A few stayed and waited to watch. As did the Pelloroxo and I. No words passed between us. Our coup had been played. But what now? What would be the final outcome? Our cargo of *tagua* was still in the hold of that ship. An

hour passed, or perhaps two; I was keeping no account of time. Then the shouting of the captain came to us faintly over the water. The boat whistled—from habit, I suppose—and there followed a mighty churning of sand and water from the great stern wheel in reverse.

I held my breath, and I observed that my friend's face, too, was hard and set. But still nothing happened. More whistling and billows of black smoke full of hot sparks and more furious churning. Half an hour or so of this. But there the boat remained; listed, perhaps, a little less than before; but still fast. At last I was able to breathe again. I looked at the Pelloroxo. His eyes were still hard, but he grinned.

"How do you think, friend Theophilo, is the best way," he asked speculatively, "to bring our prisoners to terms?"

"Prisoners" was a word most satisfactory to contemplate. Yet I asked him how he could consider that we two on the bank could call prisoners men who were on a ship a quarter of a mile away, even though stuck fast upon a sand bank.

"The boat can not leave that place," he said shortly. "And they can not leave the boat."

"How so?" I demanded.

But he only grinned the more hardly and sat him down in the shade to wait. I with him, wondering what would be the next move. It was not a long wait. Mighty preparations went forth on the ship. With much shouting of the captain a great anchor was lifted from the bow and lowered into a boat. The cable was lowered also; and the boat then proceeded to row off up-stream.

"Ha!" I exclaimed. "They will drop the anchor above and will kedge off with the winch. *Carramba!* they will escape us yet."

"That is to be seen," said the Pelloroxo coolly. "This will be the test." And, as the boat appeared from behind the steamer's body laboring up-steam, he raised his rifle and fired.

I heard the answering crack of the ball somewhere in the boat and the scream of a man. In instant confusion the boat turned and scurried back to the shelter of the ship. The Pelloroxo grinned out wide.

"The test holds good in our favor," he said grimly.

But even as he spoke, one shouted a warning. A bullet spattered among the rocks of the shore front and the quick report of a rifle came from the ship. Without waste of time all who still watched scrambled for shelter behind the jungle fringe. In safety, the Pelloroxo grinned at me as I embraced him.

"Truly are they prisoners," I agreed. "They can not see us, while we can watch them at our leisure. Yet—" a horrid thought came to me—"they will surely try by night."

"I am not at all afraid of the night," said the Pelloroxo easily. "The distance is but two hundred meters. This is not the cloud season; and even when the moon will be late, the star reflection on the water will show up a boat black against the surface. And they will have a long way to row with that anchor. No, my friend, they will not succeed by night. We can hold them for a month."

"And when we must at last sleep?" I found objection.

But he was confident.

"We will post our Indians to watch and wake us as soon as anything occurs. Their eyes are better than ours; and besides, I have taught my *piloto* to shoot."

"There will be other dangers," said I.

"Assuredly," said he. "But lesser ones. We shall meet them as they come."

And so it turned out. To those other *bateleros* who still watched from the jungle fringe I said:

"My friends, this affair is our business. Bullets that will come will be for us. Do you, therefore, leave us to attend to our business. And will one of you do me the favor to send my *piloto*."

So they went. And if curiosity impelled any to watch still, they watched from some other point, leaving us to our vigil from our selected spot directly opposite to the stranded steamer.

With the first coming of the dark they, of course, made another attempt to carry out their anchor. But it was as the Pelloroxo had said. The boat showed up as a black smudge clear against the shiny surface of the water. A few balls from our rifles sent them quickly scurrying back to the shelter of the ship, just as before. Whether we struck, or by how far we missed, I could not tell. But what matter? We went close enough to make them realize that an open boat is a wide target and that no one can tell whom a ball might strike or when.

"*Graça Deus*, it is true," I said. "We can hold them for a month if need be."

And I laughed. For the situation was not without humor. There were those brigands, having stolen our *tagua* nuts; and here were we, able to keep them there at our will till we should hit upon some plan of recovering our property.

And the plan, after much talk during the following day, was that I should come down with all speed, paddling a double crew night and day, to Manaos, where I have friends, who are even now ready to come back with me and take back what is ours.

Only one further danger I foresaw before I came; and that was that some of them might make the farther shore under cover of the night and the bulk of the ship, and so row down-stream and across again and men creep upon the Pelloroxo through the jungle. But he was supremely confident. He leaned back against his comfortable bed of leaves and lighted first one of those terrible cigarets. Then he blew smoke into the clean jungle and grinned without care.

"*Psha*," said he. "Have no fear on that score. I will post my Indians in a circle to watch. They have their blow guns. I shall be safer than in a city. Have no fear, *amigo;* but go swiftly and return with help. The ship at least will be here. I can guarantee you that. And I will be here, keeping watch with my rifle and my good Indians over our wealth. And of those robbers, some *may* still be here. Some, I think, may be dead; others may well get a bellyful before our little bickering is over, and they may steal away. What matter? They can not steal away our cargo any more."



SO there he is, Senhor. Your Fire-Head son, eating and drinking and sleeping with a rifle across his knees, holding down a ship load of robbers. And here am I, ready to laugh at the situation; for all things have now turned in our favor, and the situation is in our hands and complete. For, look you, this is that Fire-Head's plan, a plan which has my approval.

That I charter here quickly a small river steamer and go up with our friends and transfer our stolen cargo right at the sand spit.

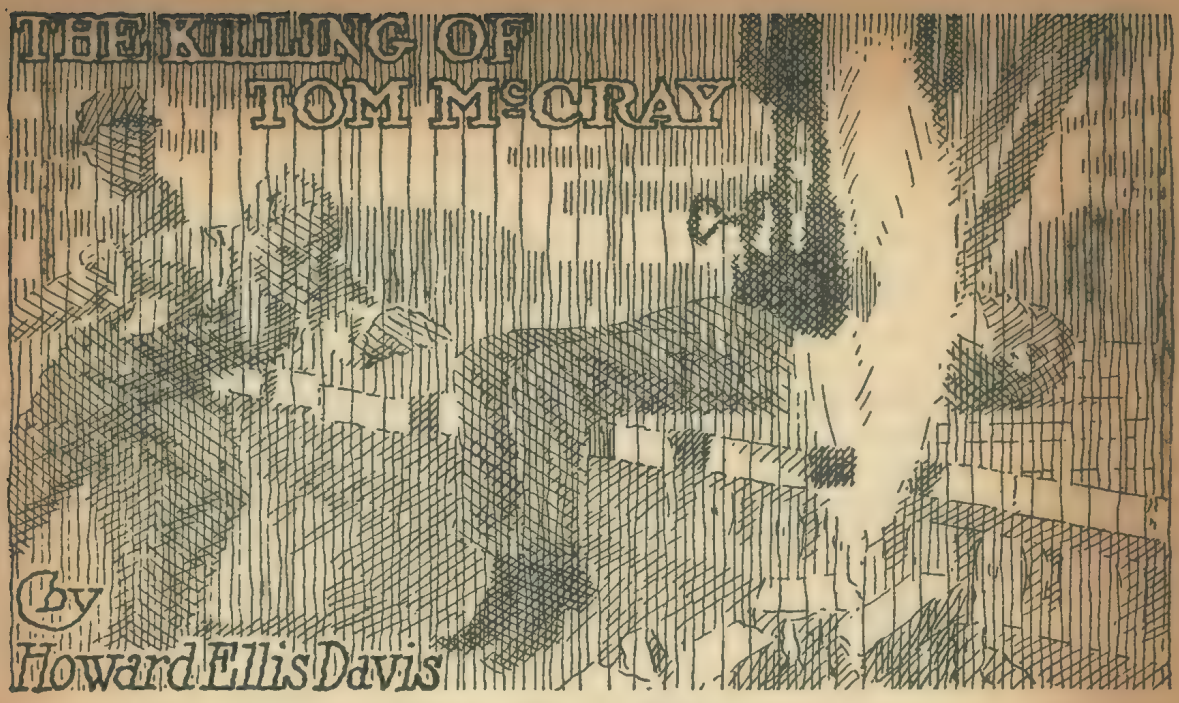
Come with us, Senhor, to witness this jest that will be your son's triumph. For consider what will then happen. We shall chase those robbers, any who may still remain, into the jungles. We shall not hunt them down; for we are not vindictive. *Dientro*, let them suffer a while from the insects before we let them return to the community of respectable folk. When that time comes they will have learned to leave alone such men as Theophilo da Costa and Pelloroxo.

And the Da Sylvestra, if we do not have to kill him, being caught with his charter of the regular steamer, must needs accept for transport the *castanha* of all those other *padrãos* at whatever price he can get—which, ho-ho, it will not be much, I can tell you. So shall the goodwill of the rest of that community of Santa Isabel swing back to us. And the last words of that incorrigible Fire-Head to me as I left him, were:

"In that institute in my home town they taught me that the third most important principle for conducting a business is, so to conduct it that you have the respect and goodwill of your neighbors.

Por Deus, a true teaching. But he did not assimilate it for a long time. Not till he came up to us of the upper rivers. But he has learned much. He has learned, and he is established now as one of us. King of the *tagua* he will be. And I, I shall have a one-third interest in the king's business. Come with us then, Senhor, and join in the *fiesta* which we shall make with our friends over that kingship.





Author of "At Pender's Gap."

THE young operative followed his chief, old Thelpin Martin, head of the Martin Detective Agency, into the private office of Mr. Jepther Ross, president of the Merchants' National Bank.

"Sit down," grunted Mr. Ross; and when both Martin and Willis Shaw had complied in silence, the bank president, a grim old man with a thin, hawk-like face, a mane of snow-white hair and deep-set, piercing gray eyes, continued:

"Well, what have you to report? It's been four, nearly five weeks since I gave you the job of finding and bringing back both McCray and the hundred thousand dollars he stole from my bank. So far as I can see, you haven't accomplished anything. Have you come to report that you give it up?"

Ignoring the thrust, old Martin said quietly:

"While we have been watching every avenue of escape to Central and South America and combing every possible hiding place here, I have reason to believe that your assistant cashier is going quietly about his business within forty miles of the city.

"Had *you* had as much experience in running down criminals as I have, Mr. Ross, you'd know that those are always the hardest to find—the ones who don't try to hide or run far. I think, however, that we have our man spotted out at Dolvin, working there under the name of James Trueman, as a laborer in the saw-mill.

"You think! Why don't you *know?*" said the bank president impatiently. "Why didn't you have this suspect arrested and brought in at once? I'm going to have Tom McCray if it costs me another ten thousand on top of what he made off with!"

Mr. Ross clenched his fist until the leaders stood out on his forearm and pounded upon his desk; and it seemed to young Shaw that the vindictive old man was more bent upon crushing McCray for his crime than he was interested in returning to the bank the funds that had been stolen.

"I thought I had persuaded you, Jepther," Martin replied, "that it would be best to get the money first, if possible, rather than arrest the man and, after he had served his prison sentence, have him recover for himself what he had hidden away. It is necessary to proceed very carefully. However, if I'm not handling the case to suit you——"

Thelpin Martin shrugged his thick shoulders and elevated the palms of his hands in an excessive gesture.

Mr. Ross glanced quickly at his old friend, then, with a change of tone.

"The Killing of Tom McCray," copyright, 1925, by Howard Ellis Davis.

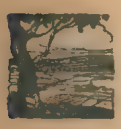
"Of course you know that I'm depending on you, Thelpin. We understand each other. You realize my position—that I don't want this matter known to the depositors of the bank—even to the stockholders—as long as there is any chance of the money's being recovered. My cashier is the only man here besides myself who knows it was taken. I have temporarily replaced the amount from my own funds. And of course I want that hundred thousand back. But I want McCray, too!" Again he pounded on the desk with his clenched fist. "Go on; what's your plan?"

"My plan is to send this young man," nodding in the direction of Willis, "out to Dolvin to get a job with the saw-mill company there. He is from a town up the state and has been living here only since McCray has been gone. So there is no chance of McCray's knowing who he is. I have given him a detailed description of the man we are looking for, and he has studied carefully several photographs which we have been able to get hold of.

"His business will be to meet this man Trueman and learn as speedily as possible if he is the man we're after. If Trueman is McCray, he will try to gain the man's confidence, to a certain extent, watch him carefully and learn, if possible, where the money is hidden. Those swamps up there would make an ideal hiding place. I have learned, by the way, that McCray's old home is somewhere up in that neighborhood."

Jepther Ross turned and gazed so steadily at Willis that the young man flushed.

"All right," he said tersely, "you know what I want—both the money and the man. Go to it!"



THIS interview was still fresh in the memory of Willis Shaw as he stood late that afternoon on the front porch of the mill boarding-house looking off across the bared slope to the plant at the foot of the hill. He could hear the whine of the big circular saw as the log was driven upon it, the swift, rumbling retreat of the carriage when the cut was finished.

The dull thud of squared timber, shunted from the skids, reverberated through the misty dusk. Came the sharp slap as board was piled on board. Farther along, the machines in the planer droned in a continuous monotone. The many lights about the plant gave it the appearance of a minature city. Then, suddenly, the big whistle of the saw-mill boomed, drowning the lesser sounds, followed a moment later by the hoarser, lesser volume from the whistle at the planer. The whine of saw and hum of machinery ceased; the engines slowed down, stopped. Where there had been a confusion of many sounds reigned silence.

From the saw-mill, planer, lumber camps and stock sheds streamed those who, throughout the day had toiled there—brawny negroes, dinner bucket swung on arm, straggling to the quarters beyond the branch; those whites who lived with their families in the company houses; the comparatively few who stayed at the boarding-house.

At the supper table a half hour later, he was seated opposite Trueman, whom, from the photographs he carried, Willis recognized instantly, even before his name was called boisterously by Hansen, the big Swede:

"Hey you, there, Yim Trueman," the Swede said as he leaned forward and speared a boiled potato with his fork, "cuttin' them small logs up live into deckin' and piece stuff keeps us yumpin', I'll say so."

"Jumping is right," Trueman replied with a laugh as, contrary to custom, he passed to Willis a dish of hash before helping his own plate.

"I feed that edger so —— fast that it seem like one piece of lumber go through all the time," Hansen continued. "On the other side that edger, you off-bear the lumber so lively it seem like you dancin'. I seen you go wobbly just before knockin'-off time. I think old bear got you sure."

"He was right behind me, Carl."

"He get you tomorrow, maybe."

"Oh, no. I've been promoted."

"Promoted?"

The murmur went up from the men, and they paused in the hasty bolting of their food to gaze at Trueman.

"Yes; the foreman told me he wanted me on the log-deck to scale. He's going to move Winters from the scaling job to the pond."

Willis noticed that the men smiled and nodded in approval. "That job on the log-deck's a cinch—and more pay," remarked one.

"Knowed you was too good a man to stay in that off-bearin' job long," said Tobe Westgate, a grizzled little man who fired the dry-kiln.

As Willis watched Jim Trueman smiling, talking, laughing with the other men, a doubt began to creep into his mind. Martin, his chief, had described McCray, the absconding assistant cashier, to him in detail, and he had carefully studied the photographs.

There was a strong resemblance to this man, Trueman; and yet there was a marked difference. Trueman's face was thinner, and no such smile as Trueman's had lurked about the eyes that had looked out at him from the pictures of McCray. The pictured face had been tight-lipped, rather cynical. Martin's description had borne out the impression of the man Willis had formed from the photographs.

"However," he decided, "it's either McCray or a near relative; and it's up to me to find out which."

When they had risen and filed out into the hall, he approached Trueman, who already had turned toward the foot of the stairs.

"This is Mr. Trueman, I believe?" he said. "My name is Shaw."

"Well!" The reply was uncompromising, the man's face going suddenly hard. He extended no hand to acknowledge the introduction.

"Mrs. Peterson told me that you are in a room by yourself. I wanted to see if you wouldn't take me in with you."

"No," Trueman snapped. "I told Mrs. Peterson emphatically that— But you've got to sleep somewhere, haven't you?" he interrupted himself, his face breaking into a sudden smile. "Oh, Carl; come here. Here's a man to sleep with you."

"Sure," said the big Swede, lumbering up to them. "I'm glad of his company."

An hour later, however, Willis crept from Hansen's room and, crossing the hall, tapped lightly upon the door through which he had seen Trueman enter. At the rather sharp bidding to come in, he went into the room, closing the door behind him.

A fire was burning brightly, and the room had a cheerful, homelike appearance; but his host stood in the middle of the floor, frowning at him, evidently waiting for him to state his business.

"Say, Trueman," he exclaimed, ignoring the frown, "you've just got to take me in. Hansen has that little stove in his room red-hot, and he says it's too rainy and cold outside for me to raise a window. His wet shoes are beneath the stove, and—er—by Jove, old man, if you don't let me come in here I'll have to move out into the hall and bunk on the floor!"

With surprising suddenness, Trueman threw back his head and laughed heartily.

"You're certainly up against a combination of circumstances," he said. "Get your things and come on over. You can bunk in here with me—until you can make other arrangements. Just tell Carl I've changed my mind about taking you in. Don't hurt his feelings." His gray eyes softened. "His heart's all right, even if—if he's not all that might be desired as a roommate."

Seated before the fire, after the transfer had been made, Trueman asked him:

"Going to work here?"

"Yes; that is if I can get a job."

"What doing?"

"Anything I can find to do about the mill."

"You don't look like a laborer," eyeing the slight build of the other man.

"I'm not; always did book work," Willis truthfully replied.

"Then why don't you try the office?"

"Did. They don't need anybody. Got to have a job of some kind."

"Well, they are short-handed in the mill; but you look pretty soft. Might be able to stand the racket, though—if you've got the guts. And if you can hang to it—you *must* hang to it! It will help you.

"Knew a fellow once who had an office job and got into a rut. The longer he stayed the deeper got the rut, until it seemed as if the sides reached up like straight walls, impossible to climb over. He grew to hate his job, his boss, and, most of all, himself. Grew sour, sour as ——. Degenerated. Wasn't a man any longer. Then he broke away. Didn't climb out of the rut, just broke through and left. Got a job with his hands—with his hands!"

Trueman, now standing beside his chair, raised his muscular arms and clenched his hands, calloused and scarred, in spite of the heavy work gloves, now resting on a corner of the mantel.

"Worked his body nearly to death and it made another man of him."

Suddenly a light broke upon Willis. This man whom Trueman had described was Trueman himself, in that other life in the bank. This accounted for the change of contour in his face, the change of expression about his eyes. Unconsciously he rose

to his feet and stood facing the other man. Trueman's very next words, however, threw him again in doubt:

"Take me, for instance. I had an office job once—and chucked it for this. Here, I—I believe I'm beginning to find myself. It's harking back to the calling of my ancestors. My father and grandfather were both log men. It's born in me to love the smell of freshly sawed pine. I'd rather feel pine needles under my feet than the pavement of any city that ever was created.

"I'll be on the log-deck, now, scaling logs. Next, I'll go to the woods. I'll ask to be sent there. A year or two in the woods among the timber; then—well, this plant is comparatively young.

"There are fifty thousand acres of virgin timber into which their logging road is just beginning to crawl. Who can tell what might be in store for a fellow who's got the right stuff in him? These people are wide awake, appreciative. The president is through the mill or in the woods every day. I have reason to believe it was he suggested that I be put on the log-deck. Yes, sir; I believe I'm beginning to find myself! For the sake of my old man's memory, I'd like to."

His tall, rather slender figure erect, hands thrust deep into his pockets, the color mounting high in his thin, tanned cheeks, Trueman had been pacing up and down the room, his speech coming jerkily, more as if he talked to himself, giving voice to thoughts that crowded his brain until there must be an outlet.

Suddenly, now, he paused in his stride and a harsh laugh broke from his lips. Then, as if it were something unconsciously done, he turned and, seizing a piece of wood, threw it upon the fire with such violence that the live coals flew, scattering, out upon the threadbare rug. While Willis, with a folded newspaper, was hastily brushing them back upon the hearth, the other man abruptly left the room. Surprized, somewhat bewildered, the young detective stood gazing at the sharply slammed door.



THE days that followed were trying ones for Willis. He was soft, and clumsy about his work, and stuck at his job as a mill-hand only by sheer force of will. He let no opportunity pass to search for the stolen funds, though he had never been able fully to make up his mind that Jim Trueman was the alias of Tom McCray. On that first night, after having been left so unceremoniously by Trueman, who had not returned until long after Willis was in bed, he had made a thorough search of the room, carefully combing through the other man's few possessions, thumping and prodding the mattress and even, having pried loose some boards at the back of the shallow closet, he searched the adjoining loft beneath the eaves.

Guarded inquiries revealed the fact that Trueman, tramping in over the logging-road, his bundle carried at the end of a short stick over his shoulder, had arrived in Dolvin about a week after the bank was robbed. No one of those of whom Willis casually inquired seemed to know where Trueman had come from, or why so little was known about the man.

Jovial and friendly with the other men, he was a prime favorite among them, and he threw himself into his work at the mill with an abandon that was good to see; but at night, within his room, he drew into his shell and had little to say. That he was laboring under a tremendous mental strain was very evident, which, Willis reasoned, was only natural. And yet, at times, the impression persisted that this was not the man they were after, that Trueman was not the alias of Tom McCray.

"Perhaps," he thought one evening as he sat by the fire watching the other man endlessly pace the floor, "he is some near relative who knows of McCray's crime and feels a certain amount of responsibility. McCray may be hiding about his old home near here and may have sent for Trueman, with whom he is keeping in touch."

The idea was rather startling. With nothing tangible upon which to base this line of reasoning, he decided to accept it as a "hunch" and spend the following Sunday investigating the old home where, according to Thelpin Martin, McCray had spent his boyhood.

On the fourth day at the mill Willis sprained his arm. He had been placed in the hole near the sawyer, tripping slabs from the live rollers, a job that required no great amount of intelligence, but quickness and some dexterity in the use of a pick—a place usually held by a negro.

But the run of logs was small—top logs, most of them. Scarcely did it seem that a

slab had flopped to the roller-bed after the cut by the circular and been snatched off into the conveyor by him than the carriage retreated, the log was turned by the steam-nigger, and the powerful twin engines drove the carriage forward again at tremendous speed, leaving another slab with which to wrestle. Sometimes, before the first slab was removed, a second came nosing along the live-rollers, fouling it. Often they got crosswise. Jerking, clawing with both hands and pick, doggedly he persevered.

As the day wore on his wrenched arm pained him without ceasing. The muscles throughout his body, stiff and sore from the unaccustomed toil, clamored for rest. In the palm of his right hand, an open cut from a piece of bark burned with the salt of his sweat. His nerves torn to a frazzled edge, it seemed as if the sharp whine of the saws and the clank of the machinery were splinters driven into his brain.

The men began to watch him, knowing grins stamped upon their faces; for, in their vernacular, the "old bear" was about to get him—an incident always treated as a huge joke. From the log-deck, Trueman waved and smiled encouragingly. Once or twice, when the sloping ramp that fed the carriage with fresh logs was full, he ran down and, thrusting Willis aside, took his place for a spell.

Neb Horton, the sawyer, a large-framed, bony man with small blue eyes, grinned tantalizingly as he tried to "smother" Willis; and at last, when it seemed inevitable that the boy's trembling knees would buckle beneath him, when his eyes were dimmed with the tears of exhaustion and mortification, he began to be filled with a rage against the man who was persistently giving him just a little more than he could do.

A light slab, jerked too soon from the roller-bed, struck him sharply on the leg, and this trivial incident was the straw that snapped his self-control. With a cry, he dropped his pick, caught up the slab and rushed upon his tormentor.

"—— you!" he shouted; and he brought the slab down across the sawyer's shoulder.

The grin never leaving his face, Horton released the knob of his lever for a moment, swept back his arm, and the big open palm of his gloved hand struck Willis heavily on the side of the head.

Reeling from the blow, Willis' heel caught on something and he fell sprawling on his back on a solid floor of boards upon a low conveyor which, moving slowly, carried them sideways against trim-saws at either side that cut them to uniform length.

He was not stunned; but he lay inert upon his back, his legs, from the knees down, dangling over the end of a wide plank. Unconscious of the plank's slow progress along the conveyor, he relaxed his tortured muscles; and he was only vaguely aware of shouts above the sound of the machinery, of a sudden cessation in the rumbling of the carriage. Then he was seized by the heels and jerked with a thump to the floor.

Scrambling to his feet, he found himself looking into the face of a giant negro who, his dark skin turned a peculiar gray, his eyes rolling whitely, was gibbering unintelligibly. Behind the negro Horton, the sawyer, was shouting hoarsely. A little back, a half-smile upon his thin, handsome face, Trueman stood with folded arms.

Then, thrusting himself forward, the sawyer shook a gloved finger in Willis' face.

"You go on home, youngster, and rest up for the balance of the day," he said. "Another six inches before Jim Trueman got you by the feet, and you'd have been floppin' around here in two pieces."

And he mopped his anxious face with his glove, leaving a streak of grease behind.

With a falling-away sensation at the pit of his stomach, Willis turned and gazed with widening eyes at the whirling trim-saw, the existence of which he had forgotten, but which, inevitably, would have ripped him in two with the board upon which he had lain.

The foreman, a youngish man with graying hair beneath his cap, came running up. Meeting him with his expressive smile, Trueman said:

"Mr. Higgins, haven't you a man you can send in here to take Shaw's place for the balance of the afternoon? He's—well," he paused to laugh. "The old bear's been right behind him for an hour or so."

Smiling understandingly, the forman nodded and turned away; and Willis, somewhat shakily, descended the stairs and left the mill. The incident was closed. Perhaps for those he was leaving behind amid the shriek of saws and the clank of machinery it was not an unusual part of the day's routine.

For him, it held the added significance that to the man suspected of having robbed

the Merchant's National of a hundred thousand dollars and on whose trail he had been set he owed his life.



THAT night after supper, when he was seated in their room before the fire, he tried to express something of the gratitude he felt.

"Jim, old man, you saved my life this afternoon," he began. "I want to tell you how——"

Trueman, who was pacing up and down the floor, turned on him with an impatient gesture, frowning.

"That's all right," he said. "It was nothing. Let's say no more about it."

"But if you hadn't been watching me and got there when you did, I——"

"I'd rather not talk tonight, if you don't mind," Trueman said; and Willis saw about his companion's gray eyes an expression of weariness, as one sees about the eyes of a man who has sat days and nights on end in a hopeless vigil at the bedside of a stricken comrade.

Slowly unlacing his shoes, Willis covertly watched him. To him the man was an anomaly, a puzzle that he found it impossible to solve. The esteem in which he, as well as the other men, held Trueman, and certain sterling qualities that, at times, cropped unconsciously to the surface, made it almost impossible for him to believe that he, holding a position of trust in the bank, could have betrayed it as Tom McCray had done.

Softened, now, by the debt of gratitude, which he could never adequately repay, and by a pity induced by that hopeless expression on Trueman's face, he was formulating in his mind a report to his chief, setting forth his belief that he was shadowing the wrong man when, with that abruptness which had characterized his action the first night, Trueman left the room, slamming the door after him.

Instantly Willis realized that it was his duty to act. If Trueman was going out on this blustery, rainy night to the hiding place of the bank's funds, he must follow him and learn where the money was hidden. If, as he had half suspected, Trueman was in touch with some relative and was going, now, to meet him, Willis must learn of this other man.

Slipping off his shoes and carrying them in his hand, he turned out the light and crept into the dark hall and down the stairs. In the hall below, he heard the other man fumbling at the rack beneath the stairs where the men hung their hats. Ignoring the need of a covering for his own head, he waited until Trueman had gone out of the front door, then slipped out after him.

The gate clicked as Willis paused on the steps to draw on his shoes. A moment later he, too, was outside, following at a safe distance the dimly-seen figure that passed around the fence and out into the road beyond.

For several days there had been heavy, intermittent showers, and the road was deep in red mud or patches of watery sand. Tonight it was colder, and the rain had slackened in volume to a blowing mist. At intervals a moon half-revealed itself through shredded clouds.

Regardless of the mud, Trueman ploughed straight down the middle of the road. At times the enshrouding darkness shut him completely from sight; at others, when the clouds overhead thinned, his figure was distinctly outlined. A mile from the village a dark object, caught by a sweeping gust of wind, came whirling along the road and flattened against Willis' legs. He picked it up and found it to be Trueman's soft hat.

Apparently heedless, the other man did not pause, but ploughed steadily on. When the moon shone down through a temporary rift in the cloud curtain, Willis saw that his bare head was thrown back, his face turned up to the night.

Steadily they floundered on, until more than three miles must have stretched behind them. Then Trueman turned into a side road, almost indistinguishable in the darkness. This, in time, led to a bawling creek, well out of its banks. The road crossed by a ford, and into this, without pausing, Trueman continued, though the water soon reached to his waist.

Stopping in surprize, Willis stood watching him; then he sought and found a footpath that led to a log, crossing the stream just above the ford.

He was halfway across the log when, from the middle of the creek below him, a burst of harsh laughter rang out upon the blustering night, followed by some words which the wind swept away before they became distinguishable.

Edging along the log, Willis came to a place where he could see a dark blotch upon

the waters of the ford. Again there was a burst of wild laughter, horrible to hear; a hoarse shout was flung into the teeth of the wind, followed by convulsive sobbing, low chortling, almost as if someone were being choked.

"My ——!" Willis breathed to himself, "the poor fellow has lost his mind."

For a quarter of an hour he looked on from his point of vantage; but for the last ten minutes the man, waist deep in the creek, with the dark waters swirling about him, had stood in perfect silence. Then Trueman, turning suddenly, splashed back to the road and Willis hastily recrossed the log, shrinking into the bushes as the other man, leaving the road, turned up beside the creek.

The course through the woods led presently to a deserted log shack, through the sagging door of which Trueman entered. A match flared and, peering through a crack, Willis saw him kindling dry wood within a mud fireplace.

Suddenly, as he bent above the growing flame, Trueman raised his head with a jerk and called over his shoulder:

"Come on in, Willis."

For a moment longer Willis stood without moving, his eyes glued to the crack, unable to believe that he had heard aright. Then, subconsciously attributing the knowledge of his presence to some instinct possessed by the demented, he went around to the door and entered, pausing just within the cabin, expecting to find a man entirely devoid of reason.

Instead, the face lighted by the crackling flames that Trueman turned to him had undergone a wonderful transformation in another way. Though the gray eyes were still heavily shadowed by dark circles, the expression of weariness was gone. Certain lines about the man's mouth had smoothed out, and he greeted Willis with a frank boyish smile, his white teeth gleaming.

"Didn't think I knew you were following me, did you?" he said. "I knew it when we left the house; but I had forgotten it, until a moment ago."

Willis moistened his dry lips with his tongue but said nothing.

"Come on over by the fire; you must be soaked," Trueman continued. "Have a seat on the floor; it's the best I can offer."

Dropping to his knees by the fire, Willis said huskily:

"Jim, old man, I—I thought you had gone crazy. I was just below you on a log when you were standing out in the middle of the creek back there, and the—the way you were going on, I thought you were insane."

Trueman laughed. "I guess you did," he said. "And perhaps I was, temporarily. I killed a man back there in the creek."

"Wh-what!"

"Yes, sir. It was a hard fight; but I killed him."

Willis leaned and peered anxiously at the other man.

"I heard something like—like choking. And I couldn't see much in the darkness. But I—I didn't think there was anybody but you."

"He was there all right."

"And you mu-murdered him, drowned him in the creek?"

"Drowned in the creek or not. Murdered whatever you will. I killed him, dead as ——, thank God!"

Gently placing a hand on his companion's drenched shoulder, Willis said soothingly:

"Let's go home, Jim. You're unstrung. With a hot drink of something inside of you and a few hours' sleep you'll feel better."

Impatiently Trueman shook the hand from his shoulder.

"You still think I'm unbalanced," he said. "But you be quiet, without interrupting me, until I tell you something. Then I have a job for you.

"In the first place, from certain indications, I have suspected, almost from the beginning, that you were sent out to find Tom McCray, who robbed the Merchants' National of a hundred thousand dollars in cash. I also was after McCray. Your presence complicated matters for me; for I was afraid you might arrest him before I had a chance to—to get to him and kill him. Beneath the floor of this shack is the money he stole from the bank. I am going to get you to return it and tell the president, Mr. Ross, that McCray, his former employee, is dead. And you may tell him that what happened to McCray is due almost entirely to him."



RAISING a loose board beside him, Trueman drew out a bundle wrapped in heavy brown paper. Untying the cords that bound it, he displayed the bundles of currency, so that Willis could roughly estimate them. Then he wrapped them up again.

"It's all there," he said; "every dollar of it."

"This McCray," Willis whispered, still too shocked to comprehend fully, "he was some relative of yours?"

"For years he was closer to me than a brother. Perhaps you will think it would have been the better, the more manly course, if I had returned the money to the bank myself, instead of sending it back by you, and had let McCray suffer for his crime. I will not try to argue that with you, because already I have suffered the tortures of the damned in uncertainty, trying to make a decision upon one of two courses.

"For I had fully made up my mind that either Tom McCray must die, or he must go and plead guilty to the theft and return the money. There could be no halfway measure. I met him tonight and killed him, and you have proved a convenient agent for taking back the bank's funds."

He rose to his feet, held out the bundle to the young detective and extended his hand.

"You can catch the early morning train into the city," he said.

Willis took the money; but he refused the outstretched hand.

"No, Jim," he said huskily. "You perhaps thought you were justified in killing this man; but I—I can't shake hands with his murderer—especially after the cold-blooded way in which you went about it."

"I understand," Trueman said, a slight smile crossing his lips. "This matter has come upon you rather suddenly. You haven't had time to think it over. When you have thought, and understood, and if you think, then, that I should be brought to account for what I have done, you will find me still in the employ of the Banson Lumber Company. I give you my word of honor as a gentleman that I will not leave.

"And bear in mind, Willis, that Tom McCray had become the degenerate he was because the individuality and manhood had been stamped out of him by his employer, Jepther Ross. It were better, was my decision, that this degenerate should die, and the past be blotted out, than that he should plead guilty and, dragging out the years of his prison sentence, sink, through hate, into a lower creature than ever. Because, knowing McCray as I did, I knew that is what would have happened."

Not offering again to shake hands, he patted Willis affectionately on the shoulder, turned him about and started him in the direction of the door.

"You'd better be on your way, old man," he said.



DESCENDING from the train in the city several hours later, Willis' young face was lined with weariness and the ordeal through which he had passed. When he had had time to think and to realize definitely the position in which he stood relative to the crime of James Trueman, at first he had been torn with doubt as to how he should act. Then he had made his decision. From a booth at the station, he called his employer and through the early dawn drove out to old Thelpin Martin's home.

Refreshed and breakfasted and with what seemed to him tons of responsibility lifted from his shoulders, he followed Thelpin into Mr. Ross' private office as soon as the president had arrived at the bank. When, without invitation, Thelpin dropped into a chair, Willis placed on the desk before the bank president the bundle containing the stolen funds.

"Here is the money you sent me after," he said simply.

To Willis' surprise, Mr. Ross shoved the bundle aside, almost impatiently. "Where's Tom McCray?" he demanded.

"He is dead, sir."

"Eh—eh! What's that? Dead?"

"Yes, sir."

"But why—what—I—I don't understand." Mr. Ross had slumped back in his chair and sat gazing blankly up at Willis; and an ashen gray pallor had overspread his stern old face.

"I—I'd rather not talk about it, if you don't mind, sir. There is your money; Tom McCray is dead." And there was the bite of sarcasm in his voice as he told the vindictive old man, "You ought to be satisfied."

Then, leaning forward so suddenly and aggressively that Willis retreated a step, Jepther Ross brought his fist smashingly down on the desk and demanded:

"Did you kill him?"

He spoke slowly, through clenched teeth, and the keen eyes glaring from beneath their heavy white brows seemed shot with points of fire.

Willis, put so suddenly upon the defensive, stammered in his reply:

"Why, no, sir; I—I didn't kill him."

He had not found it hard to believe Trueman's story of Jepther Ross' oppression of Tom McCray; but he felt now a sense of amazement at the passion that seemed to grip the old man because death had cheated him out of wrecking his vengeance on the absconding assistant cashier.

"Who did kill him, then?" Mr. Ross was demanding. "Were you present at his death? What do you know about it? How did you get the bank's funds? Did you see him at all?"

"I was with Tom McCray from the time I reached Dolvin," Willis replied quietly to this volley of questions. "We occupied the same room. On the night the funds were recovered he—he killed himself."

Again Jepther Ross sank weakly back in his chair. "Killed himself?" he whispered hoarsely. "Oh, my God! My God!" And he covered his face with his hands.

Released from the fierce eyes that had seemed to hold his own, Willis turned questioningly to Thelpin Martin and, to his surprize, found a satisfied smile on the old detective's lips. Sinking weakly into a chair, Willis mopped his perspiring face.

"To think that it should have come to this," Mr. Ross said softly. "A fresh country boy, son of the man who had been my best friend, I brought him here and ruined him. And I didn't realize it until he had gone. Though I loved him as if he had been my own son, I never let an opportunity pass to crush out his individual impulses and ideas, thinking to graft my own upon him in their stead.

"And —— how I worked him! Two years ago he moved from my home, and I knew then that he was beginning to hate me; but I would not relent, thinking that my course was the best for him. It was only after he was gone that I realized what I had done—that I had persecuted him until he had lost his manhood and his mind was ripe for crime. If—if you had brought him back to me, Thelpin, I would have told him so; and on my knees I would have begged his forgiveness. But now——"

Jepther Ross' body was shaken with a convulsive sob, and Willis saw tears slipping from between his fingers.

Then, before Willis realized what was taking place, Mr. Ross was on his feet, his thick white hair seeming to stand straight up upon his head, his face contorted with passion; his arms extended, he leaned above Willis, his long, strong fingers closing and unclosing, as if they itched to get at the young man's throat.

"You hounded him to death," he hissed. "You damned, contemptible scoundrel! You hounded that poor boy until he took his own life. I—you—you——"

But Thelpin Martin was now between them, forcing Mr. Ross back to his chair.

"There, there, Jep," he said gently, with the familiarity of a long, long friendship. "Sit you down; sit you down. It's all turning out just right—like I figured it would." With a nod over his shoulder, he dismissed Willis from the room.

Having forced Mr. Ross back into his chair, Thelpin stood behind him with his hands resting affectionately upon his shoulders; and as Willis moved quietly across the room and tried to slip without noise through the door, he heard the old detective add:

"Now that you've learned your lesson, Jep, we'll have a little further talk, then we'll run out to Dolvin on the noon train, and somebody, and it won't be Tom McCray, will be given another chance. And if you make good, we'll see— Oh, well, we'll see what'll we'll see."



PARDS

A Five-Part Story—Part II

by

Hugh Pendexter



Author of "The Bush Lopers," "The Homesteaders," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

FRANK ELLIS woke up one bright morning in California Gulch to find himself a total failure. All through the winter of 1862 he had trailed from one holding to another until the gold mining season was at a close. He was penniless, and he had a sister back east who believed him a great success. There was nothing left for him to do but take a job over the lunch counter of the Great Western Hotel, under the hand of George Skillings, boss.

As he was serving his first meal to a group of miners, traders and mine employees, he unconsciously burst into a plaintive song.

"Stop that —— racket," the boss roared.

From that time on he was the "Singing Pilgrim."

The Pilgrim became a drawing card. Nate Goss, the gambler; "Rabbit," the Indian, doomed to death by his tribe on a charge of killing a brother tribesman; "Ancient Days," an old-time placer miner; "Bones," a man with a prehistoric delusion of great beasts in the gulches—all fell into the lure of the Pilgrim's voice.

"Whip King," reputed to be the best wagon-train boss between the River and the coast, arrived in the gulch with a startling crack of his monstrous whip. He had no special destination, no special enemies, and he cared little for firearms. But he proved to be the friend of many restless men who fought constantly. Many was the time that his long lash sent men, armed with six-shooters, cowering in the corner.

With the season almost ended and too many men finding almost no gold, things in California Gulch became a bit thick. Goss had a fight with Charlie Dodge, the monte gambler, as a result of unfair play, and finally the Pilgrim fought with his boss. The fight itself was inconsequential, but a threat loomed in the background when the Pilgrim swore vengeance.

That night Skillings, the boss, was found with a knife in his heart, and and the Singing Pilgrim was missing from California Gulch.

CHAPTER III

THE IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

GOSS and Whip King met at the Boston Hotel for the midday meal, and under cover of the confusion discussed the homicide.

"He would't have run away if he hadn't done it," admitted Goss. "If he'd gone back to the hut and pretended to be asleep when they called for him he might have fooled them."

"Acted like a fool," rumbled Whip King. "But we must remember he's young."

"I knew he was down on his luck and had guts enough to fight if cornered," continued Goss, "but I never dreamed he'd sneak back in the night and use a knife. Think of his going out to nail an enemy and not packing a weapon! Skillings was killed with his own knife."

"Probably he did pack a gun along and then was afraid to use it."

"Then why didn't he carry a knife? Mine is still at the hut and he never wore

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one. Must have banked strong on his luck to depend on snatching a knife from Skillings. Had to grab it from Skillings' belt when he was coming over the tail-board. He couldn't have had time to try for it after Skillings' feet hit the ground."

"Skillings needed killing badly," mused Whip King. "But it's all so darned mixed up. Something aroused Skillings. He lit out the wagon, carrying a fight. If he had any weapon besides his knife, where is it? If only the knife, he would have it in his hand. Then how could the younker take it away from him? Skillings was a powerful built man."

Goss shook his head.

"Lots of puzzles, but the main facts remain—Skillings is dead by his own knife, the Pilgrim has ducked out, and Ancient Days and Big Bones are missing. Ancient and Bones liked the Pilgrim. They lit out so they wouldn't have to tell on him. Youngster's got a sister back East. He's been feeling blue along of not making a strike. Told me something about her. If Skillings only could have been killed by some one else I'd have staked Ellis to take over the Great West and run it on his own hook. But that's all in the fire now."

A man at a table near the entrance of the tent exclaimed loudly. Oaths and angry cries ran along the first table. Several men jumped up and ran from the tent. In the street outside much savage talk resounded. Goss' dark eyes blazed with desperation.

"By ——!" They've caught him!" he whispered to Whip King. "I'm going out. You needn't come into this. It's none of your hash."

"Some of the cattle seem to be tangled up," gruffly replied Whip King. "Think I can help straighten out the mess. He must have a square show. Don't try any gun play. He had a right at the wagons. Went back to sleep there with his two friends. Skillings broke from the corral with a knife. Had tried to kill him before. Self defense is the ticket. Ought to go in any miners' court."

But before they could leave the table the proprietor of the Boston hurried up to them and excitedly cried:

"What do you think! That Skillings was worse than we supposed."

"The Singing Pilgrim?" harshly broke in Goss. "Where is he?"

"Good land! How should I know when don't anybody seem to know." Goss relaxed. The proprietor continued:

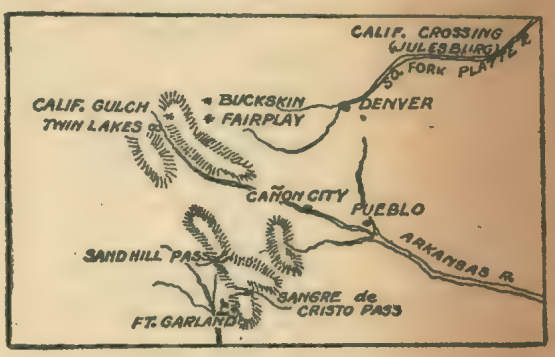
"A committee examined into Skillings property so's we can advertise for heirs in the *Rocky Mountain News*. And what do you think?"

"You never mind what we think. S'pose you tell what you think," growled Whip King.

"Well, they've found twenty thousand dollars in counterfeit script hidden in his wagon, the one he slept in!"

The proprietor paused to enjoy their surprize.

Goss laughed, rejoicing that Ellis had not been captured, also because Skillings' death would seem less of a crime now the bogus



money had been found. Whip King was excited by the news and mumbled heatedly. Recovering his composure he lamented:

"To think no one suspected him! He was receiving supplies of the script and holding it for others to pass. He was one of the gang that's working from Denver to New Mexico. If the men chasing the Pilgrim knew this latest they'd be coming back and wishing the Pilgrim good luck."

But the proprietor discouraged any such belief by adding:

"Many of the men now believe the Pilgrim was in cahoots with Skillings about the counterfeit money. They're more keen to find him than ever."

"Euchred!" snapped Goss, rising. "I'm going to my shack to get a few hours sleep."

"I'll drift over to the Miner's Home and keep my ears open for more news," mumbled Whip King.

Goss went to his small log cabin and threw himself on the bunk, intending to get a bit of sleep against the waking hours of the night. For an hour he tossed and turned, his mind persisting in dwelling on the problem of Skillings' death. The door

creaked and began to open. The gambler's eyes were apparently closed in slumber. The right hand hung limply over the side of the bunk, the fingers touching the butt of a forty-four handgun. He saw the aperture widen. He recognized the dark face and drew his hand from the gun and called out—

"Come in!"

The Rabbit entered and softly closed the door behind him. Goss coldly advised—

"My friend, you should learn the white man's way of knocking."

Rabbit leaned his rifle against the logs and seated himself on the floor and lighted his pipe.

"If the white man slept I did not wish to disturb him," he finally said.

"I am awake. My ears are open," replied Goss.

After a few puffs the hunter announced—

"I bring a talk from the Singer."

Goss' dark features remained immobile. He quietly repeated, "My ears are open. The man who will go back to be hung by his own people will not bring me a lie."

"Shot," tersely corrected the hunter. "It was agreed I should die as a hunter kills. I was drunk, and I killed a drunken man who was trying to kill me."

"And there's nothing to make you go back to the Indian nation to be shot."

"I said I would be there on June first next year, if alive," was the stolid reply. "I have learned to read and write like a white man, but I am still Indian enough to keep my word. If I did not go back my father, brothers, even my old mother, would offer themselves in my place."

"Few white men care to keep promises made to Death," mused Goss. "My ears are open."

Lowering his voice almost to a whisper the red hunter informed—

"The Singer is hiding at Twin Lakes."

Goss opened his eyes slowly and came to a sitting posture on the edge of the couch.

"After killing Skillings he should have remained here."

Rabbit shook his head and replied—

"He did not kill Skillings."

"Then why did he run away?" harshly demanded Goss.

For once he was unable to conceal his surprize.

"Many white men heard him say he would kill Skillings if the white man tried to hurt him. White men will not take a white man's word as my people will take my word. He knew they would say he killed."

"How did he know Skillings had been killed?" demanded Goss.

"I came here and told him. I was among the first to reach the wagons. I knew he would be blamed before the white men read all the signs. Your people hang first, then ask questions. After you came along and they began to say he did it I came here and woke him up and led him to the lakes. We finished the fifteen miles by sunrise. I started back here at once. He is sick in the heart. He felt better when I said I would take a talk to you today. He has blankets and meat. I shall take him a gun."

"Rabbit, you've tipped the kettle over," groaned Goss.

The hunter made no defense except to remind him—

"They were crying, 'Hang him! Hang him!' when I led him away from this place."

Goss said no more. What was done had been done through friendship. But had Ellis been found, soundly sleeping in the hut, with no signs of the homicide upon him, his innocence would practically have been established. Goss quietly asked—

"What is the talk?"

"He says for you to look for letters at the express office and send them back to him by me."

"I will do that, and write something to him. But where will he go? What will he do?"

"He has two legs and is young. He can go where he chooses. He can work for white men."

"And be found and hung! He ran away. No miners' court would believe you or him. Now they're even saying he and Skillings passed worthless money in the gulch."

"That is bad," gravely agreed the Indian. "A court of my people would believe me. But he will not be found if he is wise. The season will soon close. The miners will have eyes only for the wagons taking them East, or for the bars and dancehalls of the valley towns. He is called the Singing Pilgrim. He can take any name he will, and if he does not sing no one will be looking for him after another moon. Before it is time for me to go back and be killed he can come back to his camp and no one will bother him. White ears in Colorado hear nothing but the voice of gold."

"You talk —— smooth, Rabbit."

The hunter emptied his pipe and stood up, and remarked:

"My red name means 'The First Speaker.' When will you write your talk for the singer?"

Goss paced the small room, perplexed to know just what word he would send. If Ellis was not found inside of another twenty-four hours the searchers would be returning to their work and the peak of the danger would be passed.

"When do you go back to him?"

"Tonight. After it is dark."

"See me before you go and I will have my talk ready. I can not think straight now. I will look for letters for him."

He was at the door when Goss shot after him—

"Rabbit, who killed Skillings?"

The hunter paused but made no reply.

"Did you?" Goss demanded.

"No. A white man killed him."

"Do you have any idea what white man?"

"I know the man."

"Who is he?"

"I have not said."

And with that the Indian passed through the doorway.



DISGUSTED by the Indian's reticence the gambler threw himself into a barrel-chair and grappled with the problem. Ellis' flight had convicted him in the minds of a great majority of Oro's citizens. The discovery of the bogus script had inflamed the public against him as well as against the dead man.

With no jails for housing the accused and with no patience for drawn-out hearings, let alone the entire lack of legal mechanism for conducting the same, the camp was bound to try, convict and execute, and have done with a disagreeable business as expeditiously as possible. Of course there was the chance of a speedy acquittal did Ellis return and stand his trial.

Had it not been for the discovery of the counterfeit money Goss would have sent peremptory word for the Pilgrim to return. But now he would not assume that responsibility. The young man was foot-free, and doubtless the Indian was right in saying the affair would be forgotten before another season. To risk hanging for the privilege of remaining a few more weeks in the camp would be absurd.

The gambler procured a sheet of paper and a pencil and attempted to compose a message. After ten minutes of false starts he threw down the pencil and tore up the paper. He would send Ellis some money and a good revolver, but as to advice he knew not what to write. He had a notion of smuggling him into Whip King's east-bound wagon train, but he first must have Whip King's permission.

Even with that secured there was no knowing when Whip King would start East, or from what point. Obviously the thing to do was to hunt up his friend and ask his advice and help. He believed Ellis would be safe in any of the northern camps, now that men were cleaning up their claims and preparing to join a homeward-bound outfit, or planning to spend the winter in Denver or other towns. The season was too late for much travel back and forth between the camps.

"But he'd have to go to the towns soon. even if he goes now to a camp," he mused, "So he might as well go to town now as later. But what town? Whip King shall name it. Best way would be to send him back East where he belongs."

Goss' calling made him selfish. He could easily spend his winnings, or give them away; but to mortgage his time and endeavors came a bit hard. Yet he genuinely desired to help the likable young fugitive.

He gave up the idea of sleep and decided to find Whip King and ask his advice. Cached in the floor under his couch was a reserve fund of two thousand dollars in script and gold. He intended to send Ellis a hundred of this. He carefully brushed his sleek hair and belted a gun on his hip and slipped another, the one he would give to Ellis, into a holster under his left arm. He would write his letter from the Miner's Home after talking with his friend, the freighter. As he did not plan to return to the hut before meeting the Rabbit, he dropped on his knees by the couch and started to tap his cache for a hundred dollars.

The door flew open, and, still squatting on his heels, he spun about, the belt-gun drawn and cocked. Whip King promptly stuck up his hands.

"What the ——!" impatiently exclaimed Goss. "Your manners are bad or my nerves are ragged."

And in disgust at his gun display he tossed the weapon on the couch and

motioned for his friend to take the barrel-chair.

Ignoring the invitation the wagon boss exploded—

"Catch-up and stretch out, or make a fighting corral."

"Meaning just what, Whip?" softly asked Goss, his dark eyes glowing.

"Camp's mad as Taos whisky. That counterfeit script found in Skillings' wagon is raising hobb. They now saying the Singing Pilgrim was one of the gang."

"Well, go on. How do I figure in what the camp thinks?" demanded Goss as his friend paused.

"Some hot-heads say the boy slept here along of you being such a friend to him. There's talk that you knew about the crooked money."

"Let one of them dare to say as much to my face!"

"There's fifty headed this way to say it to your face. They swear they'll clean the gulch. You light out."

"No. I know no more about the counterfeit than the Pilgrim does. That means nothing. I have done nothing except gamble."

"You gave the younker a bed. They're foolish enough to make a lot of it."

"I'll go when a committee tells me to. I'm not a fool. But I won't run before the camp says the word."

Whip King nervously played with the long lash of his whip and warned:

"They'll be here soon. Maybe you won't have a chance to go. You know the hair-trigger temper of a crowd that suddenly decides to make a mining camp pure and noble."

Goss returned to the couch and quickly emptied the cache, disposing of the money in various pockets. Whip King looked much relieved and urged—

"Don't bother about anything else. I'll look after your belongings."

"I'm not running away before I hear the talk. You trot out of here. I'll play the hand alone."

"Like ——! Think you can fight the whole gulch?"

"I'm not looking for a fight. I'll hear the committee's talk. I'll say it's a lie. Then I'll quit if allowed to go decently. But I won't be man-handled or hustled."

"I've hustled to get here ahead of them. I'm afraid they won't let you go," ominously warned Whip King.

"I've done nothing outside the law. If I start running now before being accused I'll have to duck and run all my life."

"They're coming! Thought I had more of a lead. Stay inside," tersely directed Whip King.

He pulled his black slouch hat well forward, stepped out and closed the door and leaned against the logs.

Fifty men were streaming up the slope, the foremost being within derringer range. It was more ominous that they came in silence. They halted a rod from the hut and eyed Whip King curiously. The leader informed:

"We're the latest improvement committee in Oro City, Whip King. We're looking for Nate Goss."

"He's at home and well, Tom Cameron. He's my friend. What do you folks think to do with him?"

"Improve him!" cried a man.

Several smiled grimly.

"That's no talk to make to a friend of Nate Goss," said Whip King. "He's a gambler, but he's a square one. You can drag him from that shack and kill him, but he'll take a lot of you along with him. Being his friend I shall have to stand by him and get killed. And I shall take a few with me, even if I be a great lover of peace. S'pose you men let Cameron do the talking for you and leave out the war talk."

Cameron, who had been in Colorado City two years and whose Union Ranch, fifteen miles from Oro City, was a well known stopping-place for travelers, quietly explained:

"The boys are getting tired of the way things are going in the gulch. Being in town and being impartial, they asked me to take a hand. They'll keep shut and I will do the talking. The solid men in the mountains never intended to have any such doings that have disgraced the camps in California and Nevada.

"The Montana diggings have called most of our bad characters away, and we've got along quite decent. Now a man's been murdered. It's known he was in with the gang plastering the towns with worthless money. Many believe the man who did the killing was one of the gang. I don't know nothing about that. That young man has skipped before any one accused him. It looks like he was guilty. He slept in this hut the last time he was here, At least, he

was sent here by Goss to sleep. The boys say Goss ran here and warned him to run. So now some are thinking Goss was in the crooked game. The committee is determined to smooth out these bad places."

"I'll be glad to join your committee," heartily agreed Whip King. "The boy lit out and you say his going looks like he was guilty. That's why Goss wouldn't run when he had word from me you was coming. He stayed to face the music. I'll be glad to join your committee if every accused man is given a square shake."

"Well, you don't see any ropes and we ain't waving any guns," patiently replied Cameron. "But if a shot's fired from that hut we'll blow it plumb to ——, and the man in it."

"You ought to with so big an outfit," warmly agreed Whip King.

"The long and short of it is this—Goss must clear out at once. Not a hand will be raised against him if he goes promptly."

Whip King relaxed. The door behind him opened and Goss stepped out, his hands empty.

"I never stayed where I am not wanted," he told the crowd. "I was ready to go after that trouble with Dodge. After he ran away I was made to understand I was welcome to stay. There's quite a number of cardmen in Oro, Slabtown, and Malta. You won't drive them all away. You'll want some to stay to give you a play when you feel lucky. As to knowing anything about counterfeit money—that's a lie. I'm a gambler. That's the worst any one can say of me. Skillings belonged to the gang passing counterfeit money. I detested the man. If crooked, I won't travel with such cattle."

"The singing waiter killed Skillings last night. You sent him up here to sleep. The boys say you warned him to light out," explained Cameron. "It's along of those things, and not because you're a gambler, that your rooms are wanted in place of your company."

It was on Goss' tongue to say Rabbit induced Ellis to run away, but second thought convinced him he would be making serious trouble for the Indian. For the same reason he refrained from repeating the hunter's assertion that a white man, but not Ellis, killed Skillings.

"There's some two thousand men down below who are talking through Cameron," cried one of the committee.

"I'm going," reminded Goss. "But it's idiotic for anyone to think the Pilgrim would kill a man and then come back here and go to sleep."

"No one says he went to sleep," sharply corrected Cameron. "But it would be pretty slick of him to make believe he was asleep. If he'd done that and was found making believe sleep the boys might have been fooled."

"All right. I'm through. I have several business matters to attend to and don't wish to leave until early evening. I suppose that's satisfactory."

"Any shooting or knifing business?" suspiciously asked a citizen.

Goss shook his head and assured:

"Only a quarter interest in a claim that's refused to pan out. I may find some one foolish enough to buy it. A few bills to pay and a few debts to collect. Sunrise will not find me here."

"That's reasonable," agreed Cameron. "You should have time to settle your affairs, but be out of the gulch before sunup. We'll pass word below to that effect."

And he turned and led the committee down the slope.

"Peace corral again. Heads of cattle all facing out from the circle," murmured Whip King, mopping his head with a red handkerchief. "But where'll you go?"

"Cañon City. Denver. Don't know which yet. First I shall go to see the Singing Pilgrim."

He rapidly related what the Indian had told him.

Whip King was apprehensive lest some one from the gulch stumble upon Ellis' hiding place. The gambler was quite confident the Indian had hidden him discretely.

"Rabbit and I agree it might be well to smuggle the Pilgrim out of the mountains and back East in your next wagon train."

"That could be done," readily agreed Whip King. "But I won't be returning to the River until after the season closes. If he stops singing he can stay in Denver all right. You can write to me at the Broadwell House. If I ain't there the clerk will send it after me."

"You're not traveling entirely at random then?" remarked Goss.

Whip King shook his head.

"Just looking 'round to see if it'll pay another season to freight direct to the camps instead of reshipping from Denver. I've gone direct to Buckskin. Ought to be able to deliver direct to other camps. We'd better be going."

Goss turned back into the hut long enough to pocket several tin-types and make a roll of his blankets. As they walked down the slope Whip King asked:

"What can I do to help you? Expecting any mail?"

"No mail. If any comes for the Pilgrim —Ellis is his name—tell them to forward it to the Broadwell House. Scarcely any one here knows his name. I'm making a call at the express office now to see if he has a letter. Find the Indian and tell him to look for me there or at Londoner's store. Tell him I'm run out and will go with him tonight."

"You've got to have a hoss. Oughter to have two."

"I can pick them up down below. Probably at Cameron's."

As they entered the straggling street, curious glances were cast at Goss and his dark face flushed. He knew word had passed that he was run out. His blanket roll advertised his departure. But after they had reached the express office and had decided it would be better for Whip King to ask for mail under the name of Ellis, excited voices began calling down the street.

"No mail!" snapped Whip King, darting from the office. "But what's up now?"

"Must be bringing in the Pilgrim," muttered Goss.

"Don't sound like that. Something big has happened. Prob'ly big war news."

The excitement spread up the street and engulfed them.

"Sioux have broken out!" loudly shouted a man.

People poured from huts and tents. Questions came so fast as to be unintelligible. The man mounted a drygoods box and waved his hands for silence. Then he announced:

"Word has just been received that the Sioux have declared war and are raiding the whole frontier. Minnesota is overrun and all settlers killed who have not escaped to the Mississippi. Minneapolis is burning. The Nebraska border has been pushed back. All the Plains tribes will join in. It means we'll be cut off from the East. We'll be attacked if our troops ain't sent back here from Missouri."

Although greatly exaggerated as to the success of the outbreak in Minnesota and the number of bands or tribes turning hostile, the street orator's lurid announcement was accepted at face value. Colorado's position was peculiarly dangerous and the far-sighted were fearing what they believed must come soon, a general uprising of the Plains Indians.

Even though the red forces were successfully stood off from Denver and valley towns, the mountain camps must be abandoned should the Utes join hands with the Plains tribes.

The greatest hardship would be the primary question of food. Already a delay in wagon trains making Denver meant a boost in prices. With an Indian war to blockade the freight trains, there would be danger of starvation. Gulch merchants who heard the dire prophecy darted back into their stores and began marking up their goods.

Goss smiled grimly and observed:

"About the only one to draw an ace out of this mess is the Pilgrim. Every one will be shy about wandering around looking for him. I'm going to Londoner's store. If you see the Rabbit send him to me there."



A RED curtain was strung along the eastern skyline as Goss and the Rabbit ended their fifteen-mile walk through the darkness and left the treeless valley to enter among pine-covered hills. The first rays of the morning sun lighted a desolate stretch of dead trees, skeleton forms, grim and fantastic. The Rabbit said the trees were killed by elk eating the bark and often girdling a trunk.

They passed through this dismal grove and came to another that was orderly in its green dress. This was the last barrier between them and the shore of the lower of the Twin Lakes, a wonderful emerald nearly four miles long and more than a mile wide at its greatest width. Here was peace and quiet, and Goss wished to halt and rest.

"The singing man is at the upper end," explained the Rabbit as he continued to lead the way.

He kept on and Goss limped after him for three miles. When they halted it was close to the narrow barrier, a twenty-foot-high bank which all but separated the upper from

the lower lake. There was an inch of snow in Red Mountain pass a few miles up the cañon beyond the lakes, but here at the edge of the pine growth the sun was warm with the mellowness of Indian summer.

The gambler lost no time in pulling off his boots and socks and bathing his aching feet in the cold water. Glacier ice had once filled the two depressions now made beautiful by mountain lakes. Goss was admiring the reflections of mountain heights in the perfect mirror, when the Rabbit gave a low call. Very soon Ellis came running along the shore and shouted with gladness on recognizing the gambler.

Seizing Goss' hand he shook it convulsively and exclaimed:

"Lord, but I've been lonesome! Too lonesome almost to eat. Thought the Rabbit would never come. Never dreamed you would be with him. At the best I only looked for some word from you, some bit of advice. It's mighty good of you to look me up."

"You're sizing up the draw entirely wrong," wearily corrected Goss. "They ran me out of camp. Had to go somewhere. Came here. We'll find horses at Cameron's ranch and travel easier."

"Any letters for me?"

Goss shook his head and proceeded to resume his socks and boots. Much of the joyousness vanished from Ellis' face and it was a minute before he requested details of what had happened in the gulch. While the hunter was making a fire the gambler crisply related all that had happened in Oro City.

"It was the finding of the counterfeit money that started me walking."

"It's all on account of me," Ellis mournfully regretted. "I've brought you bad luck."

Goss believed in good and bad luck, and he winced at the speech. In his mind was being born the fear that association with the Pilgrim would mean a continuation of bad luck. Yet he endeavored to make his voice hearty as he insisted:

"My game was about played out there. Skillings was the man who brought me bad luck. That counterfeit money was the last straw. Do you know who killed Skillings?"

"Not an idea. The Rabbit woke me up in your shack and told me I had to run. I was not entirely awake until we were well down the gulch. Then I wanted to go back. During the whole trip I believed I was acting foolish. I'd done nothing. Then it was too late to turn back. After he left me here yesterday it seemed as if I'd go crazy from worry and loneliness. Now you're dragged into the mess."

"You didn't drag me in," curtly replied Goss. "I was told to get out after my trouble with Dodge. Then he ran away and I was allowed to stick. But folks remembered it. It came easier for them to tell me to go the second time. Yet if they hadn't found that imitation money I could have finished the season.

"No one's shedding tears over Skillings. Some would like to have him back to hang him, that's all. But someone started the yarn you must have been in cahoots with him; and it was known you went to my cabin. I was blamed for running ahead of the mob to warn you. The —— fools! I nearly broke my feet hurrying through the darkness to get you and fetch you to the wagons."

"Just as I said. It's all along of me!"

"Oh, well! The camp's about played out. Placer mining has seen its rosiest days in Colorado. If they don't learn how to handle the quartz these mountains will be dead inside of another year or two. Want to go with me to Denver? Whip King will take you back East in one of his wagon trains."

Ellis rested his elbows on his knees and pressed his hands against his head. In a scarcely audible voice he answered:

"To think this is the end of all my high plans! Can't even stay and try! What will she think?"

"Meaning your sister, I suppose. She won't blame you. You're not to blame."

"Oh, she would never blame me. No matter what I did she wouldn't blame me. But it all means we'll lose our place. Raised money on it, you know. God help us!"

"Too big a medicine to be wasted on small affairs," growled Goss. "Why not help yourself? You've got your legs and arms. No one's taking your life. You've got your sister. If I had a sister! —— of it is I'm an only child. Quit sniveling and play your hand."

"All right, Goss. You'll hear no more sniveling. But I won't go back home if I can stay out here without being hung."

"No danger after a week or so. Oro men are beginning to scatter. Folks in Denver aren't interested in what happened in California Gulch. Perhaps your luck will turn by another season."

The Rabbit announced the breakfast was ready, and they joined him at the edge of the lake and close by the bank. They made a hearty meal of deer meat, bread and coffee. After he had eaten and had lighted a cigar, Goss' mood improved. He began to approve of their surroundings.

"I haven't taken a holiday for a long time," he remarked. "I'll sleep part of the day. Then we'll discuss plans for traveling down the valley."

Ellis' face revealed his disappointment.

"Of course you must sleep," he agreed. "I was forgetting you were up all night."

"And you're keen to be moving," said the gambler, quick to read the tell-tale expression. "Perhaps it's as well. I'll snooze for a couple of hours. I'm used to being up nights. It's my feet that bother the most."

"Goss, go back under the pines and sleep. The singing man will go with you to keep watch," spoke up the Indian. "Some Utes have been out down the valley and stolen horses. They may be coming back this way. I'll scout around and hunt for signs."

The hunter entered the timber, the white men at his heels. Goss threw himself down and drew his soft hat over his eyes. Almost instantly he was asleep. Ellis sat beside him, his mind open to homesickness and despair, dully wondering when and where it would all end. He was pressed down by his failure more than by fear of California Gulch. Goss turned on his side and the soft hat slipped from his face. Ellis was seeing him for the first time with his dark features relaxed, and he was surprized to observe how youthful the gambler looked to be. It was disquieting, if not humiliating, to realize that one so little his senior could be so direct and masterful, so firmly entrenched in determination. Ellis had felt a great fear of Charley Dodge. Goss had sought him and conquered him.

At last Ellis rose and wandered through the growth to the lake where they had eaten. For some minutes he stood staring at the mirrored mountains, yet scarcely conscious of beholding the inverted picture. Some gravel rattled down the bank and at first brought no significance to his mind. When he comprehended that something was alive on top of the barrier he conquered his impulse to glance up. Before him in the emerald water stretched the wall, separating by a fourth of a mile, the two lakes. As he stared he beheld a fringe of grotesque faces peering down at him.

With a mighty effort he turned to the right, bringing his back to the barrier. To walk slowly to the pines, to whistle softly as he advanced, was a fine test for his nerves. He fancied the savages were at his back, yet did not commit the fateful error of turning his head. He expected at each step to feel the bite of an arrow, or the benumbing shock of a bullet; yet he forced himself to whistle and proceed with measured steps. When he knew he was out of sight of the lake he bent low and ran softly over the brown floor.

He reached Goss and shook him gently by the arm. The gambler was instantly awake and stretched his arms and yawned and opened his mouth to speak, but Ellis lightly placed a hand over his lips and whispered:

"Row of Indians along the high bank! Didn't let on I saw them!"

Goss came to his feet and clapped on his hat and felt for his two guns. Ellis' rifle was on the ground. Pointing to it the gambler rolled his blankets and threw them over his shoulder and whispered:

"They've come down Lake Creek from the west. When you don't show up they'll think you went toward the Arkansas. Our camp will tell them more than one man ate there. They'll wait a bit for all of us to return. We'll pass them by making west in a wide circle."

"And the Rabbit?"

"He ought to be able to look after himself. Come!"

They noiselessly threaded their way deeper into the growth and down into a gully. Striking into a game trail that ran west, they entered it and walked more rapidly. They passed beyond the upper lake without seeing it, and entered the narrow rugged valley of Lake Creek where the stream brawled among huge boulders, and in one place passed under a natural bridge.

"Forsaken looking spot!" Ellis exclaimed, his gaze hopelessly wandering from the floor of boulders to the well-defined water line four hundred feet up the mountain side

where the mighty predecessor of the two lakes once washed the rock.

They stumbled on. Ellis often glanced back. At last Goss pointed ahead to the first of several patches of fair-sized pine, strung together with a scrub growth.

"Good cover. If we had grub we could stand off the whole Ute nation in there."

His assurance was born of optimism, for in their own rugged country the Ute tribes were a match for the bravest of the Plains Indians. They covered ten miles and finally camped where the valley twisted toward the southwest, with the trail sloping sharply upward to Red Mountain Pass.

"We'll starve," prophesied Ellis.

"We'll sleep first," declared Goss.

"Do you suppose the Rabbit can find us?" asked Ellis.

Goss drew his hat over his face, although the sun could not find him in the thick covert, and drowsily answered—

"Fool to spend his time trying if he plans on letting his own people shoot him next June."

CHAPTER IV

THE SENTENCE OF THE PIPE

EARLY in the morning the two men were up and wondering whence would come their breakfast. Goss was moody and grumbled at their plight. He insisted they should have remained at the lake and stood off the Utes if attacked. Ellis replied:

"You'd be mighty glad you're here and not down there if you'd seen that string of faces staring up out of the water, painted like so many——and as sly as panthers. They must be the band the Rabbit said had been stealing horses down the valley; they wouldn't hesitate to kill. I'll take my rifle and follow this little creek south and see if I can shoot some game."

"We've lost the Rabbit. We'll be losing ourselves yet," said Goss.

"I can't get lost so long as I stick to this creek from the south."

"And I can't lose myself if I stick to the main stream coming down from the mountains," added Goss. "But it seems we're in a devil of a mess. I'll go up this trail and get a look at the country. Maybe I can pot some game with a hand-gun. But don't go far. Be back here in an hour."

The gambler had the worst of the traveling as the upward trail was rough and zigzagged much in order to surmount an eight hundred foot rise in less than twenty-five hundred feet. Much water came out at the foot of the mountain and in places the ground was boggy. He saw no game, and so arduous was the task of keeping to the trail that he had scant time to play the hunter.

When he halted, disgusted with his errand and inclined to blame Ellis for their plight, he had an extended view of Lake Creek valley. It contained nothing to uplift his moody spirits. He pronounced it somber and dreary. The timber was poor and scattering. Scrub willows grew thickly.

The occasional patches of grass were thin, and appeared to be dead. While not versed in woodcraft he knew it was no spot the Utes would select for a camp. The trail, however, indicated they traveled up and down the narrow valley. In fleeing, he and Ellis had not got out of their path. Beset with the fear of being overtaken by the Utes he hurried down the trail, intending to follow the small creek south and find Ellis and inform him they must continue traveling away from Lake Creek.

He had no love for wild scenery. While his vocation made him a silent, reserved man, he was naturally gregarious in disposition. He liked lights and crowds and the risks of the gaming tables.

The descent to the mouth of the small tributary was fully as tiresome as had been the upward path. His boots were filthy with mud and his temper heated to a vicious pitch. His exasperation brought him to the point where he would have welcomed a fight with the Utes, and he almost believed he would relish a quarrel with Ellis. His mood greatly improved as he came to a halt and beheld his companion riding toward him on a decrepit pony and leading another.

"The Pilgrim has the luck!" he muttered. "Walks away on a blind chance and brings back two ponies."

Ellis waved his hand and tried to urge his sorry mount into a gallop.

"I found a beautiful little spot!" he cried. "Meadowland enclosed by mountains. Rich grass. Ground as level as a floor. I found these ponies there. And there's signs of beaver. I'm told they're good to eat. And I saw grouse but didn't dare shoot."

"Is there a way out of the opening except this stream?"

"I don't know, but there must be," said Ellis. "I didn't stop to explore the east or south side. But any creek flowing east must empty into the Arkansas and we can follow it. Or we camp there till it's safe to come back this way and make the Arkansas."

"The last is what we must do. Season's too short for greenhorns to go mooning among the mountains. If I'd traveled much higher up the valley I'd found snow. But the first thing is to eat. I'll knock over some grouse with my six-shooter. Doesn't make as much noise as your rifle. We'll feed and rest for a day. Then we'll come back here and Utes or no Utes, we'll go back to the lakes and down to the Arkansas. This wild life isn't my game nor yours. Still we have brains enough to accommodate ourselves to it for a bit. We won't have to walk as long as those nags hold out."

He mounted the second pony and Ellis turned and led the way south. The animals showed no spirit and plodded along slowly, pausing to graze despite their riders' kicking heels. Having no bridles it was difficult to guide the ponies and once Goss had to dismount and turn his steed around to keep him from making for the Lake Creek valley.

As the way grew narrower and the thin grass gave out, the ponies walked more briskly, intent on reaching the succulent feed of the opening below. The walls of the gulch approached closer together until the way appeared to be a mere slit through the towering rocks. The morning light became twilight, and the gambler complained they were entering a tunnel.

Suddenly the brawling of the pent-in creek ceased and Goss was shielding his eyes against the abrupt return of the sunlight. The cold dampness was succeeded by genial warmth. From the mouth of the gulch the two were gazing on a small park, roughly round in shape with a small grassy hill rising in the center. Through this level opening the creek meandered placidly, with willows along the banks mirrored in the quiet waters. Pines and spruce with soldierly erectness covered much of the lower slopes. Against the blue sky rubbed the bare rocks, already frosted with snow.

"It's a mighty fine layout!" exclaimed Goss. "Looks tame enough down here. We have blankets and guns and ponies. Point where I shall look for grouse and then build a fire."

Both dismounted, and the ponies fell to grazing on the rich grass. Ellis indicated the nearest growth of evergreens, and directed:

"Along the edge. They seem to be tame."

Goss started for the timber, a revolver in his hand. Inside of five minutes after disappearing from his companion's sight he had shot two grouse and was proudly returning to the creek. They dressed and broiled the birds and ate heartily although they had no seasoning.

"I'd give five dollars for a pinch of salt," grumbled Goss. Then, after feeling in his empty pocket he added, "I'd give a hundred for a good cigar."

The lack of tobacco irritated him. He was for boldly making for the Arkansas. Absence of creature comforts and the unaccustomed environment again worked him up to the fighting edge. He gave short answers to Ellis' questions. The latter, having troubles of his own, was quick to resent this treatment. Finally he decided:

"We're only two white men and this seems to be quite a roomy place. Yet it's already too small for us. I'm ready to start back now. Better fight Utes than to be fighting each other."

"There's no fight between us," growled Goss. "At times my bark is worse than my bite. I feel I've hogged out of luck. I can't be agreeable even to myself. Why'n —— don't you sing? No, don't. It'll make me homesick. If we can round up those two bags of bones we'll start back. Fremont had trouble somewhere in these mountains and lost men. And I never let on to be smarter than Fremont's guides."

"All right. We'll go back. Quite a ways to come for our breakfast," said Ellis.

Now that they were to make for civilization, Goss quickly became more affable. He helped Ellis catch the ponies, which were too feeble or lazy to evade them long. Gathering up their blankets they armed themselves with willow whips and urged their mounts down the creek toward the slot through the tall walls.

Goss repeated his request for a song, declaring the danger of homesickness had passed. Ellis willingly obliged and started on "Westward Ho!" He had finished the first stanza when the gambler interrupted him by pointing to the left and crying:

"—— me! Knew I was in for a stretch of bad luck!"

Ellis followed the direction of his hand and discovered six mounted Indians making swiftly from the timber for the crack in the wall ahead. Racing the savages for the narrow exit was out of the question. Goss even allowed his pony to halt and graze. "We're bottled up!" he muttered.

"Good ——! Look behind!" cried Ellis.

A dozen braves, their long braids of hair snapping behind them, were riding down the creek at a furious gallop.

There was no cover except the fringe of willows along the stream. Goss slid to the ground and rested the barrel of his gun across the pony's back, intending to utilize the animal as breastwork against the Indians coming down the creek. Ellis imitated his example, but face the Indians between them and the exit from the park, and aimed his rifle on the leader.

A chorus of wild howls rose from both galloping bands which not only startled the stillness of the opening but incited the ponies to bolt toward the spruce growth. The two men were left naked to the attack.



THE yelling suddenly ceased and the two parties slowed down to a walk. From the larger band a rider detached himself and galloped ahead, his open hands held high in the sign of friendship.

"Most of them have guns. All of them have bows and arrows," said Goss. "It's sure death if we fight, yet I'm willing. What do you say?"

"There's my sister," hoarsely replied Ellis. "I mustn't miss a chance to get out alive." And he lowered his rifle.

Goss thrust his gun in his belt. The two bands kicked their ponies into a gallop and with a wild flurry of hoofs, quickly surrounded the white men. The leader, who had made the sign of peace, flew from his pony and ran to the prisoners, his hands open before him. He kept repeating—

"Good! good!"

Then with a quick movement he snatched Ellis' rifle away and almost at the same time jerked the gambler's gun from its holster.

Immediately rough hands were laid on the two and they felt nooses of horsehair ropes around their necks. Their hands were tied at their backs. With loud whoops the entire band started up the creek toward the south. As the prisoners desperately hurried along to escape strangulation their captors would scowl murderously and make threatening gesture. The man having Goss in tow pointed dramatically at the two broken-down ponies and talked vehemently. The gambler shook his head to indicate he did not understand.

Ellis caught something of the pantomime and told his companion—

"Awful big fuss to make because we rode a few miles on those castaway beasts."

The rope around his throat tightened and cut off speech.

The way led to the southern end of the park, a distance of three miles, and then swerved abruptly to the right, or west, into the mouth of a narrow gulch. Its presence could not be suspected by a stranger until he was close upon it. The traveling grew rougher, the Indians taking to the dried-up bed of a mountain creek which was scattered thickly with small and large boulders. Only by the utmost agility did the white men escape being dragged by the neck. It was evident the Indians were not particular whether they took them along dead or alive, as no consideration was shown.

When Goss managed to get a brief breathing spell he choked:

"Well, —— their hides! If I'd seen this I'd made it a fight!"

"We're still alive," reminded Ellis' muffled voice.

For five or six miles they clambered and bumped over and against the boulders. When they were on the point of exhaustion, their faces bleeding from abrasions, the gulch widened and debouched into a beautiful park of about the same size as the one where the capture was made. There were twenty or more skin lodges, and the absence of women and children indicated it was a temporary settlement, a hunting or war camp.

A considerable herd of ponies was grazing in the rich grass near the mouth of the gulch. From the lodges came the wailing of a single voice. But what interested the prisoners, now that the ropes were removed from their necks, was the sight of a white man sitting on the right of their approach to the lodges He was smoking a pipe, and on discovering the prisoners he jumped to his feet and ran toward them, calling out—

"Who are you?"

An Indian struck at him with his bow and smashed the head of the pipe. The man

stared ruefully at the stem still held in his fingers, then picked up the bowl only to drop it on satisfying himself it was hopelessly broken.

A Ute unfastened the prisoners' hands and in pantomime promised to cut their throats if they wandered near the outlet. Finding themselves free they advanced to the white man, and Goss announced:

"We're prisoners. Are you?"

"For two weeks. If this isn't a pretty mess!" He looked to be scarcely past his majority. He was slim of build and had tousled light hair. His blue eyes were round and staring. Both Goss and Ellis appraised him as being a bit simple-minded. His facial expression suggested perpetual surprise.

The gambler gave his name and introduced Ellis as the Singing Pilgrim.

"I'm called Euclid because of my abstruse calculations. If these Indians hadn't picked me up I'd have revolutionized the process of quartz mining before now."

Lowering his voice as if fearing their savage captors would understand he confided:

"By higher mathematics I've discovered how to conquer sulfurets. Best stampers now are saving only a fourth of the gold. The silver and copper are wasted. Our miners can't seem to understand they must do different'n than they do in California where there is no refractory ore. We lose surface profits by trying to get rid of sulphurets by wrong methods. We exhaust the decomposed surface quartz in the first year and then find ourselves in caps and pinches and those abominable sulfurets. But with one sheet of paper and a lead pencil I've discovered——"

"We remarked we're prisoners. If you're called Euclid you must be the man Whip King was asking for in California Gulch. Said the last time he saw you you were being mobbed in Central City," harshly broke in Goss.

"They didn't understand at Central City. Where's Whip King now?"

An Indian darted forward and struck at Euclid viciously with a piece of firewood. The blow was dodged neatly, but Euclid became silent and walked farther from the lodges, followed by Goss and Ellis. None of the Indians followed them. The wailing from the camp grew more piercing. Euclid whispered:

"Little Tree, father of Red Crow, chief of this band, accidentally shot himself through the breast with a revolver. Medicine man is trying to cure him. Old fool was pounding the butt against a rock. Wish the whole tribe had caught the same bullet!"

"If they've kept you alive two weeks there's a chance for us," hopefully said Ellis.

"Oh, I'm sure of it. But I'm losing too much time. Time's money. If they had to catch a white man why did they have to bag the best assayer in the mountains? In any mountains?" sighed Euclid.

"I'd hate to have such a poor opinion of myself," grunted Goss.

Euclid did not appear to sense any irony. He started to explain in detail the importance of his work when the voice of the medicine man abruptly ceased.

"The old buck's dead!" whispered Euclid, staring at the lodges.

The silence continued for a minute, then commenced much shouting and men began running about. One warrior ran to the pony herd and called loudly to the guards. Immediately three ponies were driven one side and shot with arrows. A fourth pony was hurried to the camp. Men brought out a blanket-wrapped form and placed it on the pony. A tall Ute with many silver ornaments decorating his two long braids of hair walked toward the west side of the park. Several men with the pony, followed.

"Man going ahead is Red Crow, son of Little Tree, the dead man," muttered Euclid.

The lodge in which Little Tree died collapsed and coals from a fire were thrown on it until it began burning; for the Utes destroy all property left by the dead. When the lodge poles and skin covering and few furnishings had been reduced to ashes several small trees were felled and dragged in and dumped on the spot; this, so that no man would erect his lodge there.

Euclid fingered the stem of his pipe and complained:

"Big fool busted my pipe. Now I can't smoke."

"Queer that Whip King should have asked about you and that now I should meet you," mused the gambler.

"Whip King means well, but he's narrow-minded. He doesn't comprehend that the universe is simply a problem in celestial mathematics and that if the great truth is ever discovered it will be by my pencil and

paper, and not by digging up ruins and preaching sermons."

"Why don't you try to think well of yourself instead of always hooting at yourself?" asked Goss.



FOUR Indians ran up to the prisoners and began pushing and shoving them about and striking them with their bows. A red man would have considered a blow from a bow a deadly insult, but the white men were thankful clubs were not used. Fierce gestures were made, knives were thrust close to their throats.

Goss pressed his left arm against the gun under his armpit and submitted with poor grace to the tough treatment, determined to show no resentment unless attacked with a mortal weapon. Ellis was alarmed. Euclid appeared used to abuse.

The Indians desisted and watched for the return of the funeral procession. A shot was heard. The men came back without the pony. They had killed the animal close by the grave of its owner. Little Tree was something that never had existed. He would not be mentioned in any conversation, nor were there any of his personal effects in existence to recall his memory. So it was with all the Utes; but if property could not be inherited it could be and was given away before death. As the men entered the camp with Red Crow in the lead the white men were subjected to more mauling.

"They act as if we were to blame for the old fellow's death," muttered Euclid as their tormentors finally finished their abuse and hurried to the lodges.

Goss picked up his soft hat and brushed it carefully, smoothed his hair and stared after the men with death in his gaze. He believed he would have opened fire on them with the unsuspected revolver had it not been for the presence of Ellis.

Euclid sucked at the pipe-stem and murmured:

"Superstition. Destroying property. Or maybe they're wiser'n white folks. No waiting around for a man to die so you can step into his shoes. By mathematics——"

"Shut up! You make my head ache," growled the gambler.

"Where'd you see old Whip King? Still freighting, I suppose," said Euclid.

It was Ellis who gratified his curiosity and mentioned some of the happenings in California Gulch, for the gambler was submerged in murderous meditations and never shifted his baleful gaze from the group of Indians.

"I heard something about Charley Dodge when I was up in the Gregory Diggings," remarked Euclid. "Pretty reckless sort of a man. Folks don't like to cross him."

"Goss, here, made him back down. Come near killing him," proudly informed Ellis.

The Utes now advanced in a body upon the prisoners, and Goss stood up and pressed down on the hidden gun, his depressed cheeks and high cheek bones giving him a profile that was suggestive of Indian blood. His right hand held the lapel of his coat, ready to dart inside the coat and draw the revolver.

This time, however, the Utes halted near the prisoners and Red Crow began to address them. His eyes were venomous and while none of the prisoners understood a word of his talk, it was apparent he was denouncing them. The warriors behind and on both sides of him listened to his speech in ferocious impatience and fingered their clubs and knives and short-handled axes as if waiting for some word.

"I shall take five or six with me," the gambler muttered from the corner of his mouth. "Go down fighting."

Red Crow suddenly ceased talking and began lifting his hand. His men leaned forward as if waiting for the word that would release them. From the lower end of the park sounded a shrill ululating cry. The chief's hand halted, half-raised, and he and his men shifted their gaze in the direction of the interruption. A small band of mounted Indians were rapidly galloping up the park, and the leader commenced shouting and waving his arms.

Ellis, standing at the gambler's shoulder, tremulously whispered—

"The second man is the Rabbit!"

Euclid exclaimed:

"Thank the Lord! Here comes the White Chief of the Utes. I promised to help him make a million from placer diggings he knows about."

The tableau persisted while the returning band came up at a smashing gallop, driving a dozen riderless horses before it. Then the tensity of Red Crow's men relaxed and they began shouting salutations to the newcomers. They expressed much joy on being

told in turn of the successful raid down the Arkansas valley. As the mounted men leaped to the ground and joined the group around Red Crow, the latter dropped his hand and listened to the leader's talk in moody silence.

Goss and Ellis were amazed when the Rabbit gave no sign of recognizing them. The gambler was first to take the cue and warned Ellis:

"Doesn't want them to know he knows us. Don't speak to him."

The leader of the horse thieves entered into earnest conversation with Red Crow and as he talked he nodded several times toward Euclid. Goss studied the heavily painted face and noted the broken nose and light, yellowish eyes and smiled grimly. No amount of paint or Indian toggery could conceal from him the fact the man was born white.

The Rabbit showed no interest in the scene. His dark face was as expressionless as a piece of quartz as he stared steadily at the angry countenance of Red Crow. As a result of the White Chief's talk Red Crow betrayed indecision. His men, too, reflected his state of mind. The most of them put up their knives and axes and lowered their clubs.

Red Crow said something that switched the renegade's gaze to the Rabbit. The latter muttered something, and the White Chief was inspired to make another short speech. When he finished Red Crow turned on his heel and walked to the lodges, followed by his men. The White Chief dismissed his followers with a few words and, with the Rabbit, remained with the prisoners.

Goss greeted—

"Hello, Lomsom."

With a white man's oath the painted leader advanced a step and thrust a hand roughly under the gambler's chin and glared into his eyes.

"—— you, Goss! I don't know as I'd have talked so strong if I'd seen it was you," he exclaimed.

"I'm not to blame if you had to light out from Salt Lake City," quietly replied Goss. "I never looked over your shoulder to give your hand away. You can call them back and give them a different talk; but don't bring the Pilgrim here into it as you can't hold any grudge against him. Besides, he's wanted for killing a man in California Gulch."

This gruesome endorsement permitted Ellis to gain some favor in Lomsom's estimation. Euclid earnestly added:

"Both these men are my friends, Chief. What happens to one must happen to all of us."

"Close your meat-trap," growled Lomsom. But he squatted on the ground and his eyes lost some of their ferocity. "Goss, you're a gambler. You never crossed my trail. But the sight of your —— smooth face makes me remember Salt Lake City, Porter Rockwell, the Huntington brothers, Bill Hickman, and more of that kind who would-a liked to seen me cut off behind my ears. Then again if I ever dare break away from these Injuns it'll be some one like you who'll know me and give me away."

"No. I wouldn't have given you away if we'd met in any of the camps. Too many men are walking around out here in broad daylight who are known to be killers, for me to start in naming them. Just now I'm in a bad mess trying to save the Pilgrim here who's wanted for killing a hotel man in California Gulch."

This confession seemed to remove the last of Lomsom's animosity and suspicion.

"That sounds all right," he admitted. "But I'm hunted. I quit the Danites and they'd like to take a whack at me. Then some folks seem to think I knifed a wagon train man. With gentiles and Mormons wanting my hair, I'm likely to feel the pinchers nipping. The only safe place for me to sleep in is a Ute camp. I lead a small band of young men who don't take to old Ouray and his Eastern ways. I don't dare to leave the mountains."

"Ride over the range north to the Beaver Head country or the Snake River camps or to Nevada. You'll never be bothered."



EUCLID, his round eyes trying to grow even larger, shrilly broke in:

"Some would call it coincidence the way you two old friends meet here. But there's no such thing as chance. Your meeting here is one of the many million little factors in the eternal equation. There's no reason why you shouldn't tell the Indians to let these men go free."

Lomsom laughed sardonically and replied—

"I s'pose their taking and riding two

sacred or medicine ponies is all smoothed out by your way of figuring."

The prisoners stared at him blankly. He tersely explained:

"Goss and this other feller are facing death for riding the medicine-ponies. Early in the summer Red Crow was cornered by some Kiowas at the edge of the plains. He said he'd give two ponies to the bad god if his hide was saved. Mighty big thunder storm and cloudburst nearly drowned him and the Kiowas, but he got clear. He kept his word and gave the ponies. Of course no one must ever strike or ride them. Goss and this other feller rode them and kicked them. That's enough to settle their hash in any Ute camp. Now the bad god will raise —— with Red Crow."

"But they are such poor ponies!" protested Ellis.

"That don't make any difference," angrily retorted Lomsom. "Mebbe the bad god is rather foolish and accepts crow-bait for real hossflesh. But that don't change the fact you two have done a very bad thing in riding and striking them."

"That can be fixed," said Goss. "You give Red Crow two of the American horses you brought in. He can give two more ponies to the bad god. That ought to square the deal."

"Yah-h! I'd look fine giving away hossflesh that I traveled way down to Beaver Creek to lift," snarled Lomsom.

Speaking for the first time the Rabbit curtly advised—

"Give the horses to save these two men."

Lomsom stared at him wrathfully and warned:

"You're red and may have a pull with the Utes. But I'm the White Chief. They might take a notion to tie you to a pony's heels."

The Rabbit smiled slightly and replied:

"I know the Utes better than you do. I've met and talked with many of them while out hunting. They call me the Walking Dead Man; for they know I have only until June first to live. No Ute will place a hand on me, no matter what I do. They would as quick think of striking a ghost."

"Chief, give the horses," urged Euclid. "If you don't, I won't use my calculations on your secret diggings."

"You round-faced fool!" gritted Lomsom. "Even now they want to skin you alive for killing Little Tree, father of Red Crow. They believe a white stranger always brings a bad spirit to a camp or village. Little Tree dies while you're here. He was sick before these other two men came in. You've no time to think about saving any one but yorself."

The Rabbit said:

"It is true they believe a white man brings a bad spirit to a village. But what if some one should tell them that Lomsom, a white man, driven out of a Mormon city because he had a bad spirit always at his side, brought death to Little Tree? What if the Walking Dead Man, whose voice is that of a ghost, should ask them to look back over the time you've lived with them? They might find several deaths to be blamed to you."

Lomsom's lips twitched and he hoarsely exclaimed:

"I'm red. I ain't white."

"They will listen very hard to what the Walking Dead Man says. Call your own men and tell them to kill me. No one will lift a hand."

"What's to stop me lifting a hand against you?" cried Lomsom.

"Fear of death. You love life, or you wouldn't live with the Utes. Red Crow would be the first to try for your life."

Lomsom drew a deep breath and sullenly surrendered, "I ain't narrer. I ain't got anything against Goss or the young pup with him. I'll give the two hosses to Red Crow. I can steal some more. But if I do that you must talk strong to save this other feller whose blamed for Little Tree's death. I'm banking on him to clean up enough gold to take me far from here."

"If I had a dredge I could take millions out of the Twin Lakes' sands!" mused Euclid.

"I'll be glad to help the young man," readily agreed the Rabbit. "We'll go and have a talk now before Red Crow stirs up more trouble."

"All right for the Pilgrim to sing?" asked Goss. "I feel like some music."

"Bleat his head off if he wants to," growled Lomsom.

Ellis was in no mood for singing, but Goss insisted, and as Lomsom and the Rabbit made for the southern side of the camp they were followed by the pathos and melody of "My Old Kentucky Home." Lomsom halted and looked back for a few moments.

The effect on Euclid was most pronounced.

He stared at Ellis as if under a spell; and when the song was finished he jumped to his feet, declaring:

"That's singing. Got to smoke on that. You ought to get a job at Denver, singing."

"No, not at singing," mumbled Ellis, with a frightened side-glance at Goss.

"He's been blamed for killing a skunk he never harmed," explained the gambler. "He's known as the Singing Pilgrim. Best for him not to sing in Denver for a season at least."

"Anyway, it's prime music. Let's stretch our legs. No one will notice so long as we don't go near the pony herd."

Ellis was willing. Goss fished a deck of cards from his pocket and decided to remain where he was and play solitaire. Euclid led the way to the lodges, explaining:

"I'm bound to have a smoke. You saw that red beast smash my pipe? But I know where there's others, lots of them. Indian pipes."

He halted before a large lodge and pulled back the entrance flap. There were no blankets in the place nor any other signs of it being used as a habitation except the several pipes hanging from the center pole. Ellis did not wish to enter. He feared it would be intruding.

Euclid assured him:

"I've learned a lot about Indians. You're expected to walk in where you want to. When I'm hungry I go into any lodge and squat. Indians don't know anything about ringing doorbells or knocking. Go where you want to. It's their way. I know a lot about them."

As he talked he stepped inside. Ellis, with some misgivings, followed him. Euclid further explained:

"As I make it out this is sort of a club room. Free to every one. Indians meet here and talk over things. Funny lot of trash they cart around."

And he nodded toward a buffalo robe on which was the painted skull of a buffalo, a horn from a mountain sheep that measured three feet in length and was nearly five inches through at the base, some curious rocks, and a miscellany of other objects.

While his companion was examining the pipes Ellis examined the medicine collection more carefully and became interested in a small stone statue. While ignorant of the red man's ways he knew the little idol was beyond the Ute's culture plane. He decided it was of Aztec origin. Meanwhile Euclid selected a pipe with a long and decorated stem and quickly filled the bowl with tobacco.

He puffed contentedly. Curious about the statue, Ellis took it to the opening the better to examine it. Euclid followed him, mumbling:

"This draws better'n the pipe the Indians busted. Stem's too long, though, to handle easy. If the stem was shorter I'd take it. Even-Stephen."

The Rabbit appeared between two lodges, and on beholding them, halted in amazed horror. Then he was fiercely commanding:

"Fools! Come out of that medicine lodge! Put that pipe back! Knock the tobacco from it! You're stepping over your own souls. Quick! Before you are seen!"

Both intruders were alarmed by the intense earnestness of the Indian. Ellis dropped the small statue in his pocket and darted from the entrance. The Rabbit gestured for him to get clear of the camp. Euclid, inside the lodge, lost no time in emptying the bowl of tobacco and returning the pipe to its thong on the centerpole. He was nervous and alarmed but not to the extent of Ellis' fright. When he emerged from the lodge the Rabbit had vanished, gone to meet and hold back any Utes returning from the conference.

Ellis slowed his pace when clear of the lodges, and on seeing Euclid coming, he halted and waited for him.

"I'm scared," he greeted. "We were fools to go nosing in that place."

"Seems an awful row to make over a smoke in an empty skin hut," growled Euclid, now beginning to feel ashamed over his display of alarm.

"When the Rabbit speaks like that he means it," whispered Ellis.

"No harm done. None of the beggars saw us. I supposed it was all right to go into any lodge. Seems that place is an exception."

"No need to tell Goss. He'll think we're fools," said Ellis.

They joined the gambler and for some minutes watched his game of solitaire before the Utes swarmed back into their camp. Lomsom's offer of two American horses to take the place of the medicine-ponies no longer acceptable to the malign spirit was accepted. It was necessary, however, to make new medicine to propitiate the evil

agency for the vitiation of the first gift. While they were busy with this rite in the medicine-lodge the Rabbit hastened to join the prisoners.

Goss finished his game, and as he shuffled the cards he glanced up and remarked:

"Didn't stay long. Find your pipe?"

Euclid shook his head. The gambler began a new game. The Rabbit halted behind him and stood with head tilted as if fearing to hear a menacing outburst. After a minute or two of tense waiting he relaxed and remarked—

"I believe everything is all right." For the gambler's benefit he explained:

"I've talked them out of thinking any white man caused Little Tree's death. And they have agreed to take two horses in place of the ponies. If nothing else bad happens——"

He never completed the sentence. A wild outcry from the camp brought Goss to his feet, part of the cards in his hands, the rest spread out on the ground.

"Now what has happened?" he began, stuffing the cards in his pocket and jerking his left shoulder and arm to loosen the hidden gun in the armpit holster.

The Rabbit drew a deep breath and warned—

"Something very bad has happened."

"The cards haven't run good at all. Haven't got it once," moodily remarked Goss as he stooped and picked up the cards on the ground.

Euclid was worried but insisted:

"They're always howling about something. Just some of their heathenish ways. We folks from the East have read so much about the taciturnity of the red man that we expect their villages to be like cemeteries. I've learned there isn't any place noisier than an Indian village. When the women and children are present it must be as noisy as a fourth of July."



HIS words dwindled into silence as, with a still more ferocious clamor, the Utes came swarming from the lodges, leaping high and brandishing weapons. Racing desperately to keep in the lead was Lomsom. With a final burst of speed he came up to the hunter and prisoners and hoarsely cried:

"Good——! What have you fools done?"

Goss stared in bewilderment. The Rabbit said:

"They are very hard to keep alive." And there was dismay in his dark face. "Any other pipe but the medicine pipe!"

"But how can they tell? No one saw us," cried Euclid.

The Rabbit frowned for silence for now the Utes were close at hand and Red Crow was holding up the long-stemmed pipe, his savage face reflecting fear as well as rage as he shouted something.

Lomsom in an unsteady voice interpreted—

"He asks which of you smoked the medicine-pipe."

"Neither of us," answered Euclid, his round face and round blue eyes expressing astonishment.

"No good to tell him that," muttered Lomsom. "There's some trade tobacco in it and the bowl is still warm. And there's the smell of tobacco in the lodge. One of you has cooked his own goose."

Euclid's innocent face became sickly white, but he promptly said:

"I smoked it. Indian busted my pipe. Wanted a smoke. Thought it was all right."

Lomsom darted a glance at the scowling Utes. None had understood the low-spoken confession. The renegade firmly believed Euclid possessed knowledge of minerals that would permit him to find fortunes where the ordinary placer miner could not make bacon and beans. In his journeyings through the mountains, the White Chief had examined many bars and gulches and believed he knew of several that were bonanza rich. He needed the wisdom of Euclid in order to accumulate riches.

He would need, he believed, much gold before venturing on a far flight.

California Gulch had panned out very rich, but he knew that of all the thousands who had entered and frightened the game from the thickets of aspens, there were only a few who had made a strike. Now he, Lomsom, Mormon apostate and slayer of a sleeping wagon train man, was confident he could gather millions in gold if he could keep the eccentric Euclid as advisor. He turned to Red Crow and rapidly announced:

"The young white man brought in with the medicine-ponies smoked the medicine-pipe."

None of the prisoners knew he had sentenced Ellis to a horrible death. The Rabbit did not enlighten them. Stepping in front of Ellis he warned—

"This must be talked."

The Utes pressed closer and Red Crow harshly warned:

"Only death can stop the bad medicine from hurting us. Does the Walking Dead man forget he hunts game in our country and we are his friends? Does he now hunt for Death, knowing he must soon die?"

"He can not die until after new grass grows again," quietly replied the Rabbit. "He has said he would be with his people on a day named. Until that day he comes and goes like a ghost and can not be hurt. Let him talk with the white man alone. It is bad to smoke a medicine-pipe when not making medicine for the Utes, but the talk with the white man will be short. Red Crow's men are near."

The Rabbit's position among the mountain Indians was unique. He was a hostage to Death. He would be claimed by Death in the coming summer. For a man, white or red, to anticipate the sentence-day would be to invoke the hostility of Death. Red Crow glanced at his followers and read a surly acquiescence in their eyes. He bowed his head and tossed a pebble forty feet away to indicate where the Rabbit should briefly confer with the prisoner.

The Rabbit knew Euclid had no suspicion that the blame was shifted to Ellis. He was surprized when Ellis, not himself, was motioned to step aside. Goss was worried, although understanding nothing of the brief talk between the hunter and the chief. He started to follow his friend. Red Crow sternly ordered him back. The Rabbit, instead of interpreting, announced:

"He shall stand by his friend while I talk." Lomsom started to join them, fearing the Rabbit would reveal his duplicity, but the hunter in English warned him:

"Keep back. You have talked enough. But be ready to help. One shall not die alone."

"See here!" Euclid demanded of the renegade. "What's all this talk about? They're not planning any mischief to that fellow, are they? Are they still yapping about that pipe? I said I smoked it. What of it?"

"Shut up! I'm trying to save your hide. That's what it's about. That young fool rode a medicine-pony and the Indian hunter is trying to save his pelt," hoarsely growled Lomsom.

"You make sure the three of us get clear of this muss or your gold diggings won't do you any good," warned Euclid, for he was far from satisfied with the renegade's explanation. "Remember you can't tell silver from lead, nor gold from iron pyrites. It's my clear, dry process or nothing."

Lomsom savagely muttered the white man's oaths and stared dubiously at the three men now halting to confer.

The Rabbit began to talk by abruptly saying to Ellis:

"You are in bad trouble. Some shaman laid down a blue path for you, and you followed it into the medicine lodge. It was very bad to go in. It was death to touch things."

Ellis felt ill and weakly defended. "I never thought to fetch it away. You ordered us out so sharp I didn't think to put it back."

"For ——'s sake, what's all this about?" fiercely asked Goss.

The Rabbit stared curiously at Ellis and noted the furtive move of a hand to a coat pocket. He murmured:

"You are blamed for smoking the medicine-pipe. That's very bad business. What do you mean by bringing something away?"

"The little stone doll. I was looking at it when you told us to quit that place. I was so mixed up I dropped it in my pocket."

"The tribal medicine of the Uncompahgre Utes!" hissed the hunter. "You have taken that away?"

"In my pocket now," mumbled Ellis.

With a little gesture of despair the Rabbit said—

"Even Ouray couldn't save you!"

"Hold on!" cried Goss. "I take it the Pilgrim has made a fool play. But I'm backing him to the limit. I can still bite. Those redskins may rake in the pot, but it'll cost them a lot of chips."

He slipped a hand inside his coat.

"You have not the red mind. You do not understand," said the Rabbit. "If you have a pistol hidden under your coat, save a bullet for your friend and one for yourself." Then he reverted to the phraseology of the Cherokee shamans and softly lamented:

"He had stepped over his own soul. He has put it under the earth to be covered with a black rock. He is nearer the Darkening Land than I am. He will enter

among the black houses of the Darkening Land ahead of me."

This was spoken in English. Ellis, sick at heart, had nothing to say. Goss stoutly insisted:

"Not by a —— sight until we've had a play for our money. I won't chase a pair of deuces into the grave, but I'll try a bluff. He has that stone god in his pocket and they don't know it's missing. It's valuable to them?"

"The Navahos had it from Old Mexico and they prospered until they lost it. The Apaches got it and they won many fights and stole many horses and women. Then the Uncompahgre Utes got it, and they have held these mountains against all the Plains Indians," replied the Rabbit.

It was evident his white education had not in the least weakened his belief in the efficacy of the small, squat idol.

"Glad to hear it," said Goss. "Looks like we had something to swap if we can cold-deck them. Go ahead, Rabbit, and give us a talk. You keep your arms folded, Pilgrim."

"My father and grandfather were shamans when my people lived east of the Mississippi," muttered the Rabbit. "I will use our medicine, white man; but it may not work against a red medicine to help a white man. *Hayil Yul*—Listen."

He lifted his head and in a loud sing-song called on the elemental gods of his people. He invoked the aid of Uktena, the great horned serpent, of the terrapin, the hawk and the dog. The power of his gods having no relation to the size of their earthly reflections he appealed to the spider as earnestly as he did to Unelanuhi—the sun. He called on the moon.

As his red religion was zootheistic, the greater number of gods summoned to give aid were animals. He omitted fish and insect gods as being subordinate, and the situation was too desperate to depend on aught but the mightiest agencies. Nor did he appeal to the stone god, although it was a major spirit among the few inanimates.

He could not trust this deity inasmuch as it was invoked only for finding what was lost. Not only would it smack of sacrilege to petition a god bound to be in sympathy with the medicine represented by the stone idol, but there was the danger of it functioning to discover the lost medicine even though he did not call on it to help.



AT LAST he had finished, and his face was wet with sweat as he ceased staring at the heavens. The Utes, motionless, had watched him with great respect. Surely one who was sold to Death, to be delivered on day named, would be mightily protected until the fatal hour overtook him. To cut him off before his time would be to meddle with a terrible medicine and invite a terrible punishment. Ellis stood with arms folded, his eyes staring at the Cherokee like one under a spell. Goss told the hunter:

"That's a strong talk. It ought to fetch the dust to our side of the table. He no longer has the little doll. You get their eyes off me and I'll hide it. After it's hidden you can offer to trade. The Pilgrim's life for a return of the thing."

"I can keep them from him till night," said the Rabbit. "When you nod your head I will know it is put away in a dark place. Do not tell me where."

The Rabbit and Ellis walked back to the Utes and the former announced to Red Crow:

"This is no place for a medicine-talk. I have much to tell you. We will go to the medicine-lodge. The white man shall go with us."

Goss was strolling aimlessly toward a clump of timber. No one gave any heed to him. Red Crow did not approve of the hunter's suggestion. The medicine-lodge had been desecrated enough. He insisted:

"We will go under the trees and talk. Bring the white man there."

He led the way to a pine grove where his followers quickly formed a circle. Goss stood on the outside of the circle and on catching the hunter's eye, removed his hat and nodded slightly. Then he sat down on the ground beside Lomsom. The latter bitterly complained—

"Why'n —— the young fools have to touch that pipe?"

"My friend did not touch it," corrected the gambler. "It was your man."

"T'other feller can't prove that," said Lomson.

"I don't think he'll try."

Lomsom was puzzled and suspiciously asked—

"What game be you up to, Nate Goss?"

"It's a good game, and —— help you if you try to foul my hand," warned the gambler.

"You're up to some funny business," muttered the renegade. "But high talk to me is out of place in a Ute camp. I'd see both you'n your friend snagged before I'd let them rub Euclid out. I'm hanging my hat on him to help me get lots of gold."

"And I tell you it's both or neither. The Rabbit will tell Red Crow you lied if it comes to a showdown. Keep shut."

The Rabbit had taken a position opposite to Red Crow, and had Ellis on one side and Euclid on the other. After a few minutes of silence the chief stood up and said:

The Walking Dead Man has something to tell us before the smoker of the pipe becomes a ghost. The Uncompahgre men would not stop to listen to another man. We must listen to the Walking Dead Man. He counts the moons of his life on his fingers. He is almost a ghost. Our ears are open."

After a brief pause the Rabbit rose and began:

"A long time ago, Ta-vi—the Sun God—went over the lands of the Uncompahgre Utes by different trails. Sometimes he came too near and burned the grass and dried up the rivers. Sometimes he was lazy and hid in a cave and the land grew cold, and the snow was deep, and the Utes had hard work to keep alive.

"Then Ta-vi came close and burned Ta-wats, the Hare God, who was sleeping on the grass. Ta-wats was angry and fought for a long time with Ta-vi, and beat him. Then Ta-vi said he would stop coming too near and hiding too long in holes, and would cross the land of the Utes by the same trail every day. The Utes know when it will be cold and when it will be warm."

He paused and Red Crow, puzzled and impatient, stared at him angrily.

The Rabbit continued:

"They say Ta-vi is waiting until the Uncompahgre Utes lose their strongest medicine. Then he will do as he did before Ta-wats beat him. They say he will come too near and burn; then keep so far away that all the mountains will be ice. When the Cheyennes lost their medicine-arrows to the Pawnees they were whipped in battle. They were glad to buy the arrows back with many ponies."

He ceased speaking and to the surprize of all sat down.

Amazement at the seemingly purposeless speech was quickly replaced by an uneasy suspicion. There was none in the red audience who did not sense the warning and threat thus obliquely expressed. After thirty seconds of silence Red Crow stood up and harshly demanded:

"What kind of talk is this for men to hear? Has the Walking Dead Man forgotten there is a white man in this camp who will soon be a ghost? Ta-vi keeps in his trail. The Utes have lost no medicine."

The last two sentences evidenced how thoroughly the chief had comprehended the hunter's veiled warning. The latter now stood up beside his robe and slowly replied:

"The hand of Death is always on my shoulder. Each sleep it presses harder. If your medicine-man digs medicine tobacco ashes from a medicine-pipe and scatters it on my toes, he can not hurt me. I have walked close to the Darkening Land. I am almost in sight of the Black Houses. There is nothing left for me to fear.

"I speak with a straight tongue. They say the Uncompahgre Utes have lost a very strong medicine and will be glad to give many ponies to get it back, just as the Cheyennes would give many ponies to buy back their medicine-arrows. They say the Ute strong medicine is not in the medicine-lodge."

Startled glances were darted around the circle. Anger began to show in each savage countenance. Anger, because the Utes feared the Rabbit spoke the truth. For several minutes none moved from his place or spoke. Then Red Crow leaped to his feet and walked slowly to the medicine-lodge. He walked slowly to conceal the dread now choking his superstitious soul. None offered to accompany; all studiously avoided gazing after him. He entered the lodge and was out of sight for several minutes. When he emerged it was with great abruptness as if some invisible force had hurled him through the opening.

He ran at top speed, and shouted hoarsely, as one who brings word of some terrible disaster. The circle became mobile and was on its feet, some running to meet him, others swaying back and forth. Etiquette was forgotten. All seemed to be talking at once. Gesticulating and yelling, those who went to meet Red Crow, now turned back and ran behind and beside him.

On arriving at the council place the chief flung both hands high above his head and

struck a dramatic pose while waiting for silence. The confusion ended as abruptly as life ends.

"The stone-medicine is gone! The stone-medicine is gone!" Red Crow shouted several times.

None of his men spoke. He became silent, breathing deep and rapidly like an exhausted runner. The Rabbit got on his feet and asked:

"Has the Red Crow looked with sharp eyes? Has he looked everywhere in the lodge?"

"It is gone!"

The Rabbit folded his arms and swung his quick glance around the circle and loudly announced:

"Then the Walking Dead Man has more talk. My medicine tells me your stone-medicine is angry because you would kill one of the white men. Give me the three white men and do not get in front of us when we leave this place and your medicine will be returned."

Terrible rage convulsed Red Crow's usually immobile features. Now he knew there was nothing supernatural about the disappearance of the stone idol.

"The Walking Dead Man knows where the lost medicine is?" he denounced.

"No. He does not know. But he knows it will be returned when the white men are set free."

By a mighty effort the chief smoothed his countenance down to a mask-like stolidity even if he could not master his fear and anger. He forced himself to meditate. He believed the presence of at least one of the three prisoners had brought death to his father, Little Tree. He knew the medicine-ponies had been used as riding animals, that the medicine-lodge and sacred pipe had been profaned. But the loss of *the* medicine was a tribal calamity. All his ambitions of succeeding Ouray, too friendly with whites since his visit to Washington, were ashes until the stone image was recovered. He seated himself on his robe and quietly said:

"The Walking Dead Man has something to trade."

"He trades the lost medicine for the lives of three white men."

"How will he trade when he does not know where the medicine is?" demanded the chief.

"He will know after the white men have their guns and are put on horses, and after Red Crow and his men say they shall not be hurt. Send six warriors with us to the open place below this camp and my medicine will then tell me to send back word where the lost medicine is."

Lomsom touched the gambler's elbow and whispered:

"You don't take that Euclid away."

"He's nothing to me. Kill him if you want to," shortly replied Goss. "But if you buck against the Rabbit's medicine you'll quit being the White Chief of the Utes. The Rabbit might even prove you're to blame for the loss of the medicine and the death of Red Crow's father."

"There's medicine and medicine," uneasily muttered Lomsom. "But that chunk of stone didn't walk off by itself. Some of you stole it. Red Crow ain't a fool."

Red Crow whispered with some of the older men for several minutes. None of the renegade's followers were included in the conference. Lomsom noticed this and was afraid. Finally the chief stood behind his robe and announced:

"The Uncompahgre men say it is good to know how the medicine left the lodge. They say it is good to know this before a trade is made with the Walking Dead Man."

The Rabbit believed his own stone-medicine for locating what is lost could show the way to the hidden image, and he murmured an appeal to Unelanuhi to blind the eyes of the Brown Rock until the white men were safe. Then he asked—

"Who knows how the medicine went away, and where it is?"

"The medicine-pipe knows how it went away," promptly answered the chief. "It has been smoked by that white man." And he pointed a finger at Ellis. "It can not be passed around the circle to be smoked by more white men; it is very angry. It can give medicine to another pipe that will be passed and smoked. The man holding the pipe when it goes out stole the stone-medicine."



THE casting of lots by means of a lighted pipe passing around a circle to determine who should undertake some unusually hazardous service, was common among several tribes. But this appeal to the pipe was unexpected by the Rabbit and his heart was

troubled. He suspected that his offer to trade was refused. Determined to know the worst he insisted:

"Why smoke a pipe? It will not bring back the lost medicine."

"What man knows what a medicine will do?" countered Red Crow. "The medicine-pipe is very angry. Four bad things have come to the Uncompahgre men since three white men came to this camp. There are the medicine-ponies ridden by white men. A Ute man can not ride nor strike one. There is the father of Red Crow, dead because a bad spirit came here with a white man.

"There is an angry medicine-pipe a white man has smoked. Now the stone-medicine is gone. They say a white man stole it after smoking the medicine-pipe. If the voices we hear are not lies then Ta-vi will give us some fire to burn the white man until he tells where the stone-medicine is hidden. Light the pipe and bring it to the head of the circle!"

The Rabbit whispered first to Ellis and then to Euclid, "It looks bad. A medicine-man among them hopes to win great honor by this test. We must smoke."

An old man, grotesquely painted and shaking antelope hoofs for a rattle, brought a lighted pipe to the chief and indulged in some mummery as he handed it over. Then he held the rattle with two hands and took his position in the circle. This was the ambitious medicine-man the Rabbit had suspected as being the instigator of the novel test.

Red Crow puffed four times at the adulterated tobacco and filled his lungs with smoke and exhaled it slowly from nose and mouth after passing the pipe to the man on his left. In silence each Ute in turn sucked several times at the stem and permitted the smoke to issue lazily from mouth and nose.

The pipe reached Goss, whose fastidious nature rebelled. He made a wry face, but took his four puffs before passing it to Lomsom. The pipe traveled to Ellis, and he was greatly relieved to observe the tobacco would last until beyond his two friends. The Rabbit smoked leisurely and Euclid smoked impatiently, and muttered:

"I've proven there's no such thing as chance. And I know there's nothing in this silly idea of medicine."

"Smoke, but keep still," warned the Rabbit under his breath.

The pipe was burning strongly when it reached the end of the circle, the man sitting on Red Crow's right. The white men with difficulty concealed their relief. The pipe had not gone out. But the Rabbit worried them anew by informing—

"Now it comes back."

The prisoners had assumed the test was ended once the circle was traversed by the pipe. Nor did the last man to smoke pass it to Red Crow to begin another round, but started it back from left to right. Each warrior now puffed more strongly and the concoction of willow bark and a meager amount of tobacco was being rapidly consumed. With practised eye the Rabbit measured the contents of the bowl by the warrior's haste in expelling it. The smoke was almost white and very hot.

As the pipe neared Euclid the smoking was more furious and the stem was snatched quickly. With stony gaze the Rabbit saw the smoking bowl swiftly come along the line. Euclid, perhaps, doubted his expressed disbelief in chance, for his hand trembled when he took the pipe and he spilled some ashes. A low hissing sound ran around the circle and every copper face was turned on the nervous smoker in ferocious expectation. He puffed rapidly and handed it to the Rabbit. The latter saw the tobacco was all but consumed and began inhaling slowly; for now his medicine was telling him how to baffle the Utes. The pipe should go out in his hands. He drew in strongly to exhaust the fire. Ellis thwarted his ingenious purpose by excitedly snatching the pipe. The Rabbit suppressed a groan and muttered—"Hurry! Hurry!"

Ellis inhaled a mouthful of smoke. The second time he inhaled there was no smoke. He held the pipe before him and stared at it dully.

As one man, the circle of Utes shouted. Red Crow leaped to his feet and cried:

"The medicine-pipe speaks through this pipe. The stolen stone-medicine sends its voice to tell us the thief. That white man there stole the medicine. Walking Dead Man, our medicine is very strong. Open your ears to hear what the Uncompahgre men will do. If the white man holding the dead-pipe will tell where the stone-medicine is we will give you two white men to take away. That man and that man."

He pointed to the gambler and Euclid.

"What happens to the man holding the pipe?" asked the Rabbit.

"He dies. Two will go away with you."

The Rabbit jumped to his feet and cried: "Then you will never see the stone-medicine again. You can not burn the hiding place out of him, for he does not know. The Walking Dead Man who never again will see the summer grass grow tall tells you this on pipes. The Walking Dead Man does not know where the lost medicine is, but his Brown Rock medicine will find it.

"His medicine will not talk until three white men ride with him down to the valley of the Arkansas. Now, go ahead and burn a white man slowly and lose your stone-medicine forever, and have the Arapahos and the Kiowas and the Cheyennes come and carry off your women and ponies and leave these mountains filled with dead Uncompahgre warriors."

CHAPTER V

FROM BAD TO BAD

RED CROW and his men weighed the Rabbit's warning in silence. Lomsom's wild young braves felt the tug of ancient superstitions and were entirely under the influence of the chief. The medicine pipe had spoken. The circle remained motionless, eyes staring at the ground, waiting for the chief to order the white man to the fire.

The Rabbit's dark face was expressionless although he knew the singing man was sentenced to be tortured. Not Until the Utes had pegged Ellis out in spread-eagle fashion and had lighted small fires on his chest and stomach would they be convinced the stone image could not be recovered by any knowledge possessed by the thief.

Goss stepped to the Rabbit's side and whispered—

"Something must be done to help the Pilgrim."

The Rabbit frowned for him to be silent and cast a glance at the heavens. Red Crow brought his men to their feet, each filled with enthusiasm, by ordering—

"Drive four lodge poles deep in the ground and bring rawhide."

Euclid hoarsely whispered to Lomsom:

"Save him or you'll never get a smell of gold! Save him, —— you! At least you were born white!"

"They'd peg me out and burn me in a second if they thought I knew anything about that —— medicine!" growled Lomsom. "I can't do anything. He'll have to roast!"

Whooping and yelling the Utes ran for lodge poles. The Rabbit darted a glance at the western sky. Red Crow also discovered it was growing dark. He, too, swung his gaze to the west. Enormous masses of black clouds were crowding over the mountain wall, bringing an icy breeze from the top of the continent.

"Light the fire near the poles. Work fast," he commanded.

Two Indians filled an empty kettle with coals from a cooking fire, brought it forward and dumped it on the ground, and threw on fresh fuel of dead pine branches. A rain drop fell in the fire with a faint hiss.

"Faster!" ordered Red Crow.

Two men seized Ellis and began fastening rawhide thongs to his wrists and ankles. A heavy drop of rain splashed on the chief's painted nose. Goss, who now realized the situation, shivered slightly and gritted—

"——! What a race!"

A loud hissing like a nest of serpents aroused to anger rose from the fire. The Utes piled on more inflammable fuel, but the tongues of flame were drowned out as fast as they appeared.

Red Crow, much cast down and greatly worried that the Sky God in the west should blow up a storm and for the time render null the medicine of the pipe, once more consulted the heavens.

The dull, hoarse rumble of thunder was shaking through the dark heavens. Cracks of white shattered the mighty, onrushing wall, as the Thunder God resumed the ancient and endless strife with the Water and Earth Gods. A sheet of rain blurred the western ridge from view and fell on red and white men. Thinly at first came the drops, then thickly in a tremendous downpour, just as Ellis was thrown on his back and the gambler was reaching for his hidden gun and was edging to seize the chief as a hostage.

The ambitious medicine-man, who had urged the test of the pipe, spoke to Red Crow. The chief gathered his blanket about his naked shoulders and loudly shouted:

"The medicine-pipe says to put the white men in a lodge and watch them till morning. Then we will burn a man till his tongue talks straight. The pipe says the man may tell

where the lost medicine is without being burned."

A rush of wind swayed the lodges, beating them far over. It was accompanied by a terrific fall of rain. A dozen warriors surrounded the prisoners and hustled them to the camp and, with menacing gestures, thrust them into a dark lodge. The Rabbit, free to come and go as he would, joined them. Lomsom, who supposed he enjoyed a similar privilege, attempted to enter the lodge and was stopped by two of the guards.

"The White Chief of the Utes walks where he will!" he angrily shouted.

He glanced about with blurred eyes to locate some of his men. But if any of these were within hearing they were under the spell of the pipe and held back.

"Red Crow says three white men stay in here," replied a guard.

"The White Chief is an Uncompahgre man. All paths are open for him. If this red man can enter, the White Chief can enter." He pointed to the Rabbit.

"Three white men stay in this lodge. No red men. A dead man, walking, goes where he will. You have named a ghost," answered the guard, still blocking the opening against the renegade.

Lomsom turned and ran to shelter.

Inside the lodge the Rabbit was squatting on a robe and staring at the scarcely discernible faces of the prisoners. The hoarse voice of the storm and the increasing darkness was making the work of the guards outside very dismal. Euclid inconsequently remarked—

"I would have expected snow more than I would thunder and lightning."

Goss was the second to break the silence. He demanded:

"What next, Rabbit? Will they carry out the sentence in the morning?"

"They will try the singing man with fire. It is very bad. They may try to get the truth from you other white men."

"I've got six shots! First bullet is for Red Crow. They'll never burn me alive," declared the gambler.

"Death is easier that way than by fire," moodily agreed the Rabbit. But I have promised to be home on a day named. If I am killed in this place my people will never know. I must keep my promise or shame my people."

"We talk in circles!" exclaimed the gambler. "At least try to get us some more guns so we all can go down shooting."

The voice of the Thunder God became staccato as he descended from the mountains to hurl his fiery lances into the floor of the park. The darkness increased. The Rabbit glided to the flap of the lodge and peered out. Three figures were crouching across the entrance with heavy robes drawn over their heads. To his companions he announced:

"The storm is very strong. I believe that Kanati and his Boys,* and Asgaya Gigagei,† have come to help us. You shall try to run away."

"Now you talk sense!" heartily cried the gambler. "All we ask is a start from this cursed place."

"Three men are at the front of the lodge," said the Rabbit.

He stepped to the opposite side and passed his hand on the wall and located the backs of two men pressing against the skins. He made a circuit of the place, and then announced:

"We are surrounded. The Utes are afraid of the storm but the medicine in the pipe keeps them here." He lifted his head and began invoking: "O Lucky Hunter—Kanati—who with your two Thunder sons live in the west, listen. Put down a smooth path for my friends. Red Man, listen. Send them help."

And he continued, calling even on the inferior Thunder people who live in cliffs and mountains, and especially did he pray to those Thunder spirits living in the falls on Tallulah River, back in the ancient homeland of his people, east of the Mississippi River.

A terrific, crackling explosion, accompanied by a flood of white light, smothered his prayer. Stunned by the shock, the four men remained silent. The floor of the park had seemed to shake.

"——!" exclaimed the gambler.

For a few seconds the elements were silent—long enough for the frightened guards to raise a yell. Then the bombardment was renewed and a violent wind tore the lodge skins loose and swept them fluttering like monster night-birds into the darkness. The guards were scrambling for shelter. In the interstices of the tempest's clamor their yelps of terror could be heard. Other wailing cried also reached the prisoners.

* The Thunderers. † The Red Man, *i. e.*, Lightning.

The Rabbit commanded:

"Come away. Kanati and the Red Man have heard me. The lightning hit the medicine-lodge. Follow close."

He bounded away with the fierce wind at his back, and the white men followed. They ran with bowed heads, the Rabbit making for the gulch below. At last they entered an area of comparative calm where the jutting side of the gulch broke the force of the wind. The pony herd and the horses stolen by Lomsom's band already had taken shelter there. There were no signs of the herders. The Rabbit shouted in triumph and passed his hands over the animals and rapidly selected the stolen stock.

He led a man to a horse until the three were provided and gave thanks to the ancient gods on finding each of the stolen stock still wore a horse-hair bridle. Selecting a mount for himself he rode into the cañon where the effect of the storm was scarcely felt.

The gambler exulted:

"Gamed them out of the pot! That's what I call playing a hand! Regular 'Dead Man's hand'! Never was beaten! Rabbit, you win!"

"The gods of my people won," corrected the hunter as he picked a path through the scattered boulders. What had been the dry bed of a water course an hour before, was now alive with a foot of muddy water. In single file the four pushed their flight until the rain ceased and a star rekindled its light. Then the Indian halted and announced:

"The storm has blown out. I must go back. They will start a search with the first light."

"Don't go back!" pleaded Ellis. "They'll blame you and——"

"No Indian will hurt the Walking Dead Man," reminded the hunter. "I will tell them Kanati and his Boys and the Red Man set you free. Then I will make a trade. Goss, where is the stone-medicine?"

"At the foot of the tree nearest the spot where I played solitaire."

"I will trade the medicine for them to remain in camp two days. They will be glad to trade."

They heard his horse stumble as he headed him up the gulch. The gambler said:

"He stands strong with his medicine. No amount of white education can wash it out of his mind. Better dismount and lead the horses. I haven't red eyes to pick a path. There's no hurry. We have two days."



THE sun had several hours to sleep when the fugitives entered the small park where Goss and Ellis had been captured. They halted and rested their mounts and their own legs. When they resumed their flight they were galloping parallel to the flaring skyline. They entered the crack in the northern wall and found the way dark.

When they emerged into Lake Creek valley the sun was peering over the park range and observing what new trick earth's insects were up to. Euclid's usually placid countenance was haggard and Ellis could barely keep on his horse for need of sleep. Swearing softly he turned the animal loose and limped to the lake and removed his boots to bath his swollen feet in the icy water.

"What'll we do now?" lamented Euclid as he dismounted. "That white scamp, Lomsom, will be after me to work his secret diggings for him."

"I'm going to take a sleep," muttered the gambler. "You might try your 're 'cold, dry process' in securing some grub."

Ellis slipped to the ground and staggered to a spot of warm sunlight. He threw himself down and was almost instantly asleep. The sun was overhead when the gambler shook him awake and informed him:

"My feet are in bad shape. May have to stay here for another day. You're nag seems to be all right. Go down the valley and make for Denver. I'll meet you at the Broadwell House. Here's a hundred to grub-stake you." And he extended a roll of money. "Euclid can go along with you."

"I have nearly a hundred, and we can't leave you alone to be caught!" cried Ellis.

Goss patted the gun under his arm and smiled grimly. Then assured:

"They won't come down this far. The Rabbit will hold them two days. After I mend my feet I'll start after you. I can knock over some game. All I lack is a good cigar. Take the money."

"I'll stay with you," decided Euclid. "My horse isn't good for much."

"We'll all stay," said Ellis.

"You'll go," corrected the gambler. "You're wanted. No danger here for us. But you'll be better off in Denver."

"I wasn't thinking of myself. I don't like leaving you two."

"We can protect ourselves," assured Goss with a whimsical smile. "And if we get in a tight place Euclid can use his cold, dry process. Quicker you start the quicker you'll find some grub. Get along. Don't sing any. Good luck till we meet at the Broadwell House. You ought to find Whip King there."

Loath to leave them, yet believing he was in danger until far from California Gulch, Ellis shook hands, caught his horse and rode for the Arkansas. By the time he was out of sight of his friends he was planning to avoid the risk of being identified.

A ride of a mile and a quarter brought him to the mile and a half wide valley of the Arkansas, with the river hugging the eastern side. Keeping watch behind him to make sure no party of miners from California Gulch was at his heels, he rode down the valley for two miles and dismounted. Then he led his horse off the road—the same course taken by Fremont in 1845—and climbed a rocky hillock.

From this elevation he discovered several men riding from the north. He led his horse farther from the road to a spot hidden from passers-by and nervously waited until the men, five in number, had passed.

Not daring to travel close behind them he fastened his horse and threw himself on the ground to sleep. The sun was low when he opened his eyes. He knew he was within a mile of where Tabor discovered gold in 1860. When he came up the valley in the spring a few miners were there, striving to overcome the black sand. He decided it was safer to pass this place in the evening.

Although he had taken a nap at the upper lake and had slept again within gun-shot of the road, he found his eyes heavy as he sat with his back to a boulder and waited for the sun to cease balancing on the crest of the Sawatch Range. Fighting against the persistent desire to sleep, he waited until after sunset and then renewed his journey. He had not covered half a mile before he caught himself dozing. Alarmed lest he fall off his horse while asleep, he welcomed a hut on the right of the road.

At first sight he had taken it for a pile of logs, but a second inspection revealed it to be a habitation. He slipped from his horse and approached the low entrance and called out. There was no response. Finding a rope behind the shack he secured his horse in a patch of thin grass and entered the hut. It was empty, but a kettle of beans and pork were on the coals of a rude fireplace and blankets were spread on a pile of boughs at once side. The law of the road entitled him to shelter and food and he ate greedily from the kettle; and reckless to the danger of being recognized as the Singing Pilgrim, he threw himself on the low bed and almost at once was asleep.

The sound of low voices greeted him when he opened his eyes. There was a light in the low room. Through narrowed lids he saw two men sitting at a box before the fireplace. They had been eating and were now lighting their pipes. The first speech his ears managed to catch made him afraid, for one of the men was saying:

"I tell you it's one of the hosses that was stole down the valley. They blamed it on to Injuns."

"But how did he come along here if he took it?" persisted the second man, whose face was round and full like a moon.

"Never mind how he come here. He has the hoss. Probably got turned around in trying to get away from the valley road."

"Queer he ain't got a gun," mused the round-faced man.

"Queer he has nearly two hundred dollars on him. Why should an honest man be hungry if he's riding his own hoss and has that much money?"

"I dunno. I still hold Injuns ran off the hosses. That's the word sent up the valley. That Utes ran off the hosses," insisted the round-faced man.

"And I believe he's one of the gang that's been stealing hosses up and down the valley for a year or more. If he's honest he won't be hurt. You stick here to hold him if he wakes up. I'll fetch some of the boys from below."

The suspicious man rose to his feet, his cowhide boots making much noise. He was tall and gaunt, and had to walk bowed over to escape the low roof. The second man remained seated, his fat face worried. After the man had disappeared into the darkness the guard cocked his head for a few moments; then said in a low voice:

"Better not hold your breath any longer, young feller. You'll bust."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

INDIAN WIVES AND WHITE HUSBANDS

by **Josiah M. Ward**

THE early American Rocky Mountain trapper considered himself fortunate if he possessed an Indian wife; more so if he possessed two. It was not only the rough frontiersmen who took unto themselves Indian helpmates; men of distinguished families married Indian girls and raised the children of the union to become useful and honorable citizens. But the men of finer ancestry never had more than one wife and rarely abandoned or repudiated them when civilization came to the West.

Col. Elbridge Gerry, grandson of "The Signer," took a Cheyenne girl as a wife long before he had viewed the coming of white women as probable. When the discovery of gold transmuted a barren waste into the lusty young city of Denver he moved his family, one and all, wife and children, to the place because it afforded nearby facilities for education. Colonel Gerry was one of the finest gentlemen the West—or the country so far as that goes—ever produced. He added luster to an honorable name.

Colonel William Bent of Bent's Fort, grandson of the Bent who led the Boston Tea Party, and son of Missouri's first United States Judge, married a Cheyenne Indian girl and by her had three children. She died and he married her sister by whom he had two children. The five were given superior educations in St. Louis and four of them justified the expense and care. The fifth, Charles Bent, was the worst sort of renegade, a leader of outlaw Indians, who attacked farmers' houses and wagon trains, burning, pillaging and murdering.

These young Indian women possessed a charm and a comeliness that captivated men of lonely lives, such as trappers and trading station men. They were as cheerful as a happy child, with a happy child's winsomeness; they were docile, they were faithful. And they were the only wives available in those early days except a few Mexican women who were willing to brave the wilds with the men they loved.

Their native dress was very attractive, the tunics being made of soft deer or antelope skin with long fringes at all the seams and trimmed with small polished antelope hoofs, with beads, or bits of abalone shells. Their moccasins were of deerskin and ornamented with colored beads or porcupine quills. Their black hair was either braided or confined by a fillet, and their faces were tinged with vermilion. Oftener than not they were beautiful. When they married trappers these spendthrifts decked them in the finest that could be bought, vying with each other in extravagant clothing. The Indian girls, however, after the first flurry in American "fofarraws" made them over or ornamented them in the Indian fashion. Thus proving that taste in woman's clothing is a matter of geography.

An exceptional case was that of Jim Beckwourth, a French mulatto, who fought his way to the highest chieftainship of the Crow Indians. Beckwourth made a collection of Crow maidens as wives. His score was thirteen or fourteen, each lodged in an individual teepee.

In contrast with Gerry, Bent, Fontenella, Culbertson and others of the high-class men who married Indian women was Manuel Lisa, whose father came to the United States in the service of Spain, prior to the Louisiana Purchase. Lisa was the first St. Louis fur dealer to establish forts on the upper Missouri and Yellowstone rivers and to operate the business on a large scale, preceding Chouteau and Ashley. He began by trading with the Osage Indians in 1800, broadened his field, accumulated a fortune, and died in 1820. Although he had a white wife living in St. Louis he also married Mitain, daughter of an Osage chief, and by her had two children, a boy and a girl, descendants of whom are still living in Western Cities.

The first child, the girl, she surrendered to Lisa to be taken to St. Louis and educated. His first white wife who was childless died in 1817 and he next married a St. Louis woman of high social position. He asked Mitain to surrender her second child, the boy, to him that he might have it educated. Mitain begged that she, too, be taken to St. Louis, where she could at least

see her children She promised that she would not intrude upon the white wife, nor in any way create a scandal.

Lisa sternly refused her plea. He would provide for her at the fort but the children she must give up.

Mitain gave way to all the fury of her wild nature. No longer was she the docile wife. She denounced him for his cruelty and selfishness and endeavored to flee with her boy, but Lisa took possession of the child and hurriedly departed for St. Louis. She never again saw either child.

When Maximilian, Prince of Wied, was exploring and hunting in the Rockies in 1833 he met a sad-faced Indian woman and heard the story about her, her recreant white husband, and her lost children, a story with which every trapper was familiar. The woman was Mitain.

As a rule, the trapper with two Indian wives had a comprehensible system. One made his clothing, including moccasins, kept the garments comparatively clean, repaired them, lighted his lordship's pipe, and added brightness and uplift to the home. The other took care of the horses, gathered wood and did the cooking. Usually the preparation of the pelts for the market or the cache required the services of both.

La Bonte, one of the earliest trappers, was a stanch advocate of the two-wife system, and always clinched his argument with this reminiscence:

At one time he had a Ute wife whose name in English was "The Reed That Bends," a lady of the clinging vine type; and a Shoshone wife whose name in English meant "She Who Runs With the Stream," a sort of babbling brook or gossiper. During his absence on a three days hunt his camp was raided by Arapahoes, his spare horses, and his accumulation of furs seized, his lodge burned and his wives taken away as captives. La Bonte was a philosopher. He had lost all he had on earth except the clothes he wore, the horse he rode, the firearms he carried, but he calmly hobbled his horse, made a fire of the blackened ends of his lodge poles, threw a piece of buffalo meat on the coals, squatted down before the fire, and lighted his pipe.

What though he missed the delicate manipulations with which the "Brook" was won't to beat to tenderness the toughest bull steak, or the tender care of the "Reed" as she patched his torn clothing? Such was life. And after a solitary meal he drew his blanket about him and fell into sound slumber.

As he slept a figure emerged from the gloom and drew near. It approached the fire and added a log to the pile. It quietly seated itself at the foot of the sleeper, its head bowed low, and it remained silent and motionless. La Bonte slept the night through and at the first sign of day lazily raised himself on his elbow.

"Wagh!" he exclaimed.

The figure remained motionless. La Bonte, leaning over, turned up its face. It was The Reed that Bends and she was awaiting his verdict. She had escaped from her captors and made her way back to her white husband, fasting and alone. Was she to be cast off?

La Bonte welcomed her to his arms.

"That's the beauty of having two wives," he invariably added as the final clincher of his argument. "If you lose one you have the other left."



THE ELEVENTH HOUR

By William Westrup



Author of "The Pool of Execution."

JUST a loose boulder on the side of the dry watercourse, an awkward, scrambling fall of not more than ten feet, and old Jim McCall knew that his number was up and his chance of living a very slender one. For he had felt a sharp stab of pain in his right ankle and had demonstrated with one hopeless effort that the leg was no longer in working order. Thereafter he had dragged himself into the shade cast by a near-by rock, and had sat down to make a thorough examination.

Getting his boot off had been a labor of infinite agony but, once this was accomplished, at least he knew the worst. The whole ankle was turning black, and the shape was wrong. Evidently a bone was broken, either in the ankle itself or just above in the leg. Perhaps quite a small bone, but it meant everything.

"Wouldn't old Japie laugh if he was here," McCall muttered, looking searchingly at the bush and small trees all about him, for the first thing to do was to make some sort of splint. "I wish he was here—even if he did say, 'I told you so.' "

For Japie Du Plessis held, quite rightly, that it was the height of folly to venture far into the nearly uninhabited, waterless mazes of the bush-veld north of the Komati, unless some one went with you. Two together was all right, or even one, if he had a native guide; but the place was too big for a solitary prospector. So many little things may happen to a man alone—little things that would be insignificant but for the mere fact that he *is* alone. He may fall into an old prospecting hole, long forgotten, masked by the long, rank grass of summer. Perhaps it is only a dozen feet deep, but if the sides are sheer, and he is by himself— He may twist his ankle on a loose stone, or cut himself badly. He may have the ultimate misfortune to break a bone. McCall had quite agreed with the sentiments of his old partner and—had played traitor to his own knowledge.

They were a queer pair, known in every town from Lydenburg to Pietersburg. McCall was fifty-eight, thin and tough, with an instinctive as well as practical knowledge of gold and most of the valuable secrets of the earth. Du Plessis was a few years younger, looked about a hundred with his flowing gray beard, and was very large and likewise exceedingly tough. His knowledge of minerals was practically nil, but he could find his way anywhere in the out-districts of South Africa, and was a wonderful shot with a rifle.

So you have the members of a partnership that had endured for nearly thirty years, and had penetrated, with varying success, into most of the inaccessible corners of Africa. Du Plessis filled the pot and at

times sold wonderful horns and skins; McCall prospected for gold, and had had his successes.

But though they were the greatest of friends, they differed in one essential detail: McCall obstinately lived in the past, and Du Plessis—rather strangely for a man of his race—had a wondering, childish eagerness for modernity. McCall habitually carried an old .303 Lee Metford carbine, principally because it had come into his possession twenty-five years previously; Du Plessis had a wonderful rifle produced by the Mannlicher people, that had cost him his entire share of the proceeds of one of their trips. It was a perfect weapon, and the fact that it was most difficult to obtain suitable ammunition did not trouble him at all. McCall rather despised matches, unless they had sulfur tips and smelt abominably; Du Plesses had the very latest idea in automatic flint-and-steels—which never worked—and one of those electric torches that never require a refill.

Every time they got back to civilization, Du Plessis would hold back desperately from the orgy in which McCall was wont to celebrate their return. Not that he had any objection on principle, but first he wanted to ascertain whether there was any modern gadget calling for the investment of his scanty funds. Somewhere in the Free State lived his old mother, and her unimposing house was full of twenty years and more of her son's offerings. Many of the things were broken, and most of them meant absolutely nothing to her; but she was very proud of them. For many miles around the house was regarded as a sort of museum. Which is the real reason why McCall was traveling alone.

They had dropped from nowhere into Blakfontein, to buy a few odds and ends of equipment ere setting out north and east through the fever country to a spot near the Portuguese border. An old native had talked of gold—alluvial gold—in a district which they both knew, and alluvial gold is the strongest lure of all. They had made their simple purchases, and the storekeeper had happened to mention casually that he had written to Johannesburg for a steel-framed tennis racket with wire strings. Blakfontein was a sporting little dorp, and the leading tennis player had a fancy to try this new kind of racket.

That was enough for Du Plessis. In his youth he had been something of a player himself, and he felt that life would be a blank until he had inspected this latest marvel. It might arrive at any time now, and there was no hurry about their trip.

"Man," he had exclaimed, the youthful fire in his eyes contrasting strangely with his patriarchal beard, "that is what I should have had—an iron racket. The other kind—*pouf*—I always smashed them after a month or so."

But McCall had chosen to be obstinate. He refused to admit that there was no occasion for hurry. As a matter of fact no one else was in the least likely to have heard the rumor; and in any case, as it was the height of the fever season, none but thoroughly salted veterans like themselves was likely to venture the trip. But he would not admit it. They had come to Blakfontein with the intention of leaving again the next morning, and he was going to leave. Du Plessis could please himself.

Du Plessis had laughed his deep, jolly laugh, and had pointed out that McCall could never do a trip like that by himself. He would lose himself in the bush-veld, and with that funny old gun of his he could never shoot enough food. This assertion had just sufficient foundation in fact to make McCall more pig-headed than ever. He would not argue the matter at all, he would not even speak. His mind was made up.

As they had argued on every conceivable subject for some thirty years, and as McCall lost his temper every time and Du Plessis was invariably calm and jocular, the latter took no particular notice of this present difference. He was going to stay and see that wonderful racket, that was certain; McCall might pretend he was very angry, and start off by himself, but he would not go far. Five miles or so, just to get away from the dorp, and then he would halt. It had happened so before.

But McCall did not halt. The reflection on his ability to find his way through the country and live on it had hurt his pride. He would show Du Plessis. Just because the big Dutchman usually attended to the pot, he thought he was the only one in the world who could shoot straight. As for making his way to any given point, he could do it with his eyes shut. So he shouldered his pack, and pressed on. He made good time, too, and it was on the afternoon

of the fourth day that he thought he saw a buck moving in some low bush, and stood on that treacherous rock to get a better view.



WITH his hunting knife he cut two straight branches, and smoothed them down on the one side. With these he fashioned some sort of support for the broken limb, and bandaged it tightly, as well as he could, with strips torn from his shirt. A makeshift job at best, yet productive of infinite pain.

And it took time. When he had finished he saw that the sun would be sinking in half an hour, and it behoved him to gather a supply of firewood, for it was lion country. The big Umbweni game reserve stretched to within ten miles south of him, and to the east were the forests of Portuguese territory. In the morning he would think out some plan of action, but meantime he had to live through the night—if he could.

Luckily, wood was plentiful near the dried watercourse, but it was a dreadful business gathering it. He managed to get a fair amount to the open, sandy patch where he proposed to camp, but he knew it was not enough for safety. Mercifully it was summer, and the night would not be so very long.

He made some strong tea and finished what was left of a guineafowl he had shot and cooked the previous day. It was an effort to do this, for the work of collecting firewood had tried him to the utmost, and all he wished to do was to lie quite still and try to forget the agony in his leg. But he knew it would be fatal to give in, for that way lay surrender—and death. He would fight! He'd show Du Plessis that even with a broken leg he could make his way back to some native kraal, and live. He knew of a small one not much more than twenty miles due west, and he would set out at daybreak.

But in the meantime there was the night. The sounds to which his years of roaming had accustomed him took on a new significance now that he was alone and crippled. No longer could he ignore the twin spots of greenish light that shone ever and anon in the blackness and told of some prowling beast that watched him. The coughing roar of a lion, seeming to come from all points of the compass, made him curse softly; and when this changed to the sinister silence of the stalk he piled more of his precious wood on the flames and reached for his carbine.

It was a desperate vigil. Barely would his wood last till dawn, and yet it was out of the question to seek a further supply. Even had he been whole it would have been madness to leave the protection of the fire.

Two larger, gleaming eyes were staring at him from some bush away to the right. He raised his carbine and fired, more to hearten himself than with any idea of killing. There was a frightful snarl, and something went off at speed through the bush. He laughed at that—laughed almost hysterically—and heard further hurried movement at his back. He swung round, and fired again.

He was convinced the wild knew he was crippled, and therefore doomed. Never before had he known animals so persistently to hang round a camp, especially after a gun had been fired. Constantly he saw eyes in the darkness and heard stealthy sounds in the long grass. But good fortune came to him in one way, for the old tree trunk against which he had made his fire was dried out and rotten, and at last it caught. It would burn for hours, so long as he looked after it. Carefully he raked together all the small stuff that was left, and held it for emergency. He even dozed a little. So the night passed.

At the first sign of daylight he got to work. He made a crutch by cutting a two-foot stinkwood branch and fining down one end in the fire till he could jam it in the muzzle of his carbine. The butt fitted comfortably under his arm, and except for the fact that the wood would not jam firmly for any length of time the crutch answered well enough. Then he made for a waterhole he knew of, not more than a mile away down the old watercourse. It occurred to him then that the proximity of this hole accounted for the number of eyes he had seen round his camp. It cheered him up to have this natural explanation, for it was appalling to think that the wild knew he was doomed, and was merely waiting.

It was a tedious business getting to the waterhole, and took him out of his way, but it had to be done. The next water he knew of was ten miles back, and he was not all sure he could make ten miles that day. Even in the cool of early morn progress was

very difficult. The leg did not hurt so much now, but it seemed to weigh intolerably. Every little obstruction that yesterday would have passed unnoticed now had to be negotiated with much thought and care; a donga that he could have stepped over became an abyss. Once, when the branch came out of his improvised crutch, he came down on the broken leg with his full weight.

It took him an hour to reach the water-hole, and he was pretty well exhausted. But the pool was there all right, and he soaked his bandaged leg in it and drank his fill. Then he rested for a while, till the heat of the rocks warned him that the sun was mounting, and time was slipping past.

First he went through the small pack he had been carrying. Usually the partners traveled with a couple of donkeys, but he had meant to make good time on this trip, and had elected to bear his own load. Or perhaps it had been merely a species of spite, born of his somber rage against Du Plessis. He wanted to show what he could do.

But the pack now was out of the question. Regretfully he discarded his two old busk blankets, his small stock of flour, his spare pair of boots and the rest of his meager kit; all he kept was a little packet of tea and a piece of fat bacon. Those for provisions, and then his water-bottle, as full as possible.

By the time he had finished his preparations it was perhaps eight o'clock, and the sun shone down fiercely on a world rapidly yielding up every trace of the morning's sweetness. With his old pipe clamped firmly in his jaws, McCall set out on what he had a shrewd suspicion was to be his last trek. He knew well enough the penalty for disablement in the wild, but he was going to put up a big fight. Twenty miles——



TO THE uninitiated the bush-veld, looks flat or at most undulating, with here and there a kopje to serve a most useful purpose as a landmark. The hunter knows that it is rough and much cut up with dongas, littered with loose stones here and there, most difficult for a man desiring to steer a straight course. McCall, crippled as he was, found it a nightmare, a long drawn out agony of heartbreaking effort, of racking pain, beneath the pitiless glare of a tropic sun. Frequently his improvised crutch gave way, and he would fall headlong; constantly he had to make wide detours to find a possible way across a donga; the strain of his unnatural progress told heavily on even his tough muscles, and he was bathed in perspiration. But he pressed on.

He lost all count of time, and was conscious only of the agony in his leg and the blistering heat of the sun. He had thought no sun in Africa could bother his accustomed hide, but this was outrageous—a sun such as he had never experienced. He had frequent recourse to his water-bottle, and began to mutter and talk to himself as he crawled along. He was surprized that it was still daylight, for he had been walking so many hours; and yet the sun was still high, and its heat unabated.

Vaguely he became aware of movement in the long grass to his left—movement of which his trained instincts gave him warning, though he was not aware of the reason. With a shock he came back to realities, and sitting down on a convenient rock, hastily strove to pull the stick out of his carbine. The movement in the grass had ceased, but the wood was jammed. He dare not exert any sidewise pressure, for if the end broke off he could never get it out. Curious, how it had slipped out so often as he walked, and now, just at the wrong moment, it jammed.

With an exclamation of impatience he put down the carbine and picked up a fragment of stone. With a shout of startling vigor he flung this as far as he could toward the place where he had seen the movement in the grass. After all, in the wild, attack was the surest means of defense, and he had to do something. A large striped hyena broke cover, loping away unhurriedly, looking back over its shoulder. With a sudden wrench McCall got the stick out of the barrel of his carbine, slipped in a cartridge and fired. The beast broke into a clumsy, agitated gallop and soon vanished from sight.

"A hyena—and in broad daylight!" McCall muttered. "They must have me marked down all right. Fair game, just because I go along like a crab. The filthy brute! Anything that's wounded and helpless. But I reckon I've still got a kick or two left."

He broke off abruptly as a shadow swept across the ground before him, and looked up much as a rabbit might look when the sun sends warning of the approach of the

dreaded hawk. A vulture was circling slowly above him, its wings outstretched motionless, its ugly head stretched downward.

McCall shook his fist in a burst of irrational anger, for he was badly shaken.

"Come on then—flock around!" he yelled. "You hunters of dead things. I'll show you!"

He fitted another cartridge into the carbine and fired at the bird above him; but the distance was deceptive and he missed altogether. Startled, the vulture sloped sharply upward and planed away across the brazen sky.

"That'll teach 'em," McCall muttered, and screwed the stick back into the muzzle of his gun.

He was surprized to find how little water he had left, and shook his head dubiously. Handicapped as he was, he knew he could never make those ten miles between his present position and the next certainty of water. Still, he could try, and perhaps there might be a stream, not entirely dried out, on the way. With a groan of pain at the necessity for effor the stood up again, slipped his crutch into place and strove to press on.

His head was throbbing most strangely, and he found it curiously difficult to keep his balance. There was movement again in the grass, all round him, beating against the thin trunks of the camel-thorn trees. If he hadn't seen the hyena he would have thought it was just the wind, but now, of course, he knew better. Hyenas—hundreds of them—gathering round till he fell, and they could pluck up courage to make a rush. But he wasn't going to fall for a long time. He was feeling much better, and he didn't notice the pain of his leg any more. But he had to press on, and he couldn't afford the time to stop and shoot. Still, the human voice was quite enough for beasts of that sort.

Abruptly he began to sing, in a loud, husky bass, the parodied words of a song that had been popular when first he came to Africa:

Comrades, comrades, every since we were kids,
Sharing each other's tickies, sharing each other's quids.

It was years since he had sung, but now he couldn't understand why. The song sounded fine. It echoed in the wide spaces, and the sides of a near-by kopje threw it back. He imagined the hyenas sneaking away one after another. Of course the grass still moved, but any one could see it was merely the wind.

Comrades, comrades, ever since we were brats,
Sharing each other's trousers, sharing each other's hats.

They were jolly good words too—funny words. You didn't come across songs like that nowadays. It cheered a fellow up to sing, too. If he had thought of it before he would have come along much faster.

He paused at that, half inclined to retrace his steps. Realization of what he was doing came to him with a shock, and he resumed his pitiful progress fearfully. He knew well enough what it meant when a man began to get those queer fancies. But very soon he was singing again, mercifully unconscious of his pain and of the insignificant distance he was traveling. Yet, true to his instincts—the instincts of a man trained to the wild—he did not go round in circles, but preserved a more or less constant westerly direction despite his delirium.

It was perhaps three o'clock when he finally halted. He had come to an ideal spot. Here was a donga down which the waters roared after every big storm, and some particularly heavy deluge in the past had brought down a maze of uprooted trees and bush, to spew them on to a flat, open stretch of bordering grassland. Here was firewood and to spare. He'd be safe enough from the things that prowled by night so long as he had a decent fire. He wasn't going through his experience of the previous night again.

Heedless of the torrid heat, he gathered quantities of dried wood round two prone trees that had been cast up by the flood. With astonishing strength he piled more and more close by, chuckling to himself at his own forethought and cunning. Then he carefully set a match to some small stuff, and laughed gleefully as it caught, and the bigger branches began to burst into flame. He drew back a little from the heat and seated himself on the sandy earth. His water was finished but he did not notice it. Here was such a fire as a man might dream about, and the night must be drawing on.

Two native hunters from the border, on a visit to friends in a distant kraal, drew near at the unaccustomed sight of this big fire in the glare of afternoon. They stood still on the far side of the donga, but McCall

did not see them. He was singing loudly, and beating time with his right hand.

"Truly he is very drunk," one of the natives remarked.

"That is so," the other agreed. "And when the white men are drunk, they hit us without reason."

Without more ado they turned on their tracks and quickly disappeared.



DU PLESSIS soon found out that McCall had gone off in earnest. On the following morning, when he discovered that both the pack-saddles were still at the little hotel, and—presumably—both of their pack donkeys still grazing peacefully on the commonage of the outspan, he had chuckled. It would have been *slimmer* if McCall had taken one of the donkeys, just to make it look as if he really was going. So he settled himself comfortably on the hotel stoop and awaited patiently the arrival of the steel rackets.

But on the following afternoon a man came in from an outlying farm and reported that McCall had passed his place that morning, headed toward the northern Lebombo Mountains. He was carrying a pack and seemed in a bad temper. But, then, old McCall was always a bit of a character.

Du Plessis made up his mind deliberately, but with characteristic finality. McCall had gone without donkeys and had two days start. Donkeys are utterly impossible when it comes to quick traveling. Therefore it behooved him to follow McCall's example and carry his own pack. That he could let McCall go on alone never even occurred to him.

"When do you go back to your farm?" he asked the man from outside, who had driven in behind a couple of mules immunized to the sickness so fatal to their kind in the South African fever country.

"First thing tomorrow. I've got a few things to fix up, and we can make a night of it, hey?"

"Of course. But as soon as it is light tomorrow we must set out. It will save time if you drive me to your house, for I want to catch up old McCall. It—it was not fair that I let him go off by himself."

So they had had their night of it, and Du Plessis, who had an iron head, had seen to it that the unhappy farmer was on the road by daybreak. And when he had been driven as far as the farmer could take him, he strapped his pack to his massive shoulders and with a brief nod of thanks set off into the wilds. He slouched along and did not seem in any hurry; but the miles totaled up amazingly behind him.

On the afternoon of the third day he came to Sibuya's kraal—the kraal which at that moment McCall was striving desperately to reach from the other side. For McCall had passed through the kraal and was beating back to it from beyond. Most of the men were away on a hunting expedition, but the few natives still there welcomed Du Plessis hospitably. Yes, "Rhinoceros"—the native and by no means flattering name for McCall—had passed through two days since. He had stayed for the night in the guest hut, and had left early the following day. He talked very little.

Du Plessis stayed long enough to smoke a pipe in comfort and drink a huge bowl of native beer; then he shouldered his pack again and set out, heading due east for the mountains.

Toward sundown he saw the smoke of a fire, and, walking to it, found Sibuya's hunting party in camp. Sibuya was a truculent old chief with Matabele blood in his veins, an avowed despot with benign views, a staunch friend and an enthusiastic enemy. He had made a little history in his time, but in his later years had been unswervingly loyal. They had had good hunting, and Du Plessis was received with acclamation.

But when he made known that he wanted to catch up with McCall two strange natives, who had but just and by chance joined the camp for the night, asked quick questions; and then one of them laughed.

"This man you seek," he said, "we saw but three hours since. He had made a big fire, so that we wondered if the veld was alight, this not being the season. But when we drew near we saw he was seated there, singing very loudly, and waving his arms about. Truly he was very drunk."

There came a sudden silence at that, for the men of Sibuya's kraal knew well enough that such action was utterly out of keeping with the character of the man they knew as the Rhinoceros; and Du Plessis knew beyond any shadow of doubt that it meant tragedy. When any man, by himself in the wilds, begins to behave strangely, whatever the cause, the end is not far off. And in the case of McCall, a hardened campaigner, it meant that the end was near indeed.

"He was not drunk," Du Plessis remarked with ominous quietness. "It is in my mind that I go now to seek the Rhinoceros, for he needs help—as any but a mud-eating native from the forests could have seen. You who have seen him must guide me."

"That is not so," one of the natives objected. "We have traveled far today and are weary. Moreover, already it grows dark, and there are many lions. To travel at night means death."

Du Plessis held himself in with an effort and turned to Sibuya. There is a certain etiquette on such occasions.

"What do you say, Sibuya?" he demanded. "It is my old friend who needs help."

"These two," Sibuya replied judicially, indicating the two natives from the forests, "are my guests tonight, and consequently I can not say to them, 'Go!' as I would surely say to my own young men. It is a great pity, for I like you, and the Rhinoceros is also a man. But you also are my guest, so how can I say anything if you beat these two mud-eaters?"

He shook his head solemnly and took snuff from a small gourd elaborately decorated with beads. Du Plessis strode across to the squatting boys and kicked them savagely to their feet. Then he gripped them grimly, purposefully, and they yelled afresh as his huge hands sank into their flesh.

"It is in my mind that you will come, dogs," he said. "Truly the lions are bad, but you may escape them; if you do not go, most surely you will not escape me. So! Can you feel the bone crack? A little more and— Ah! We go together? It is well."

"We also come," Sibuya said shortly. "Old I am and useless, but by no means a mud-eater. Also, when I was a young man we did not squat down in the grass at the mention of a lion. Of course it is understood that many things have changed, but even now my young men can throw a spear and know how to use the broad-bladed *assegai*. What say you, my children?"

His followers gave a shout of agreement and reached for their spears. Sibuya, old and wrinkled but still full of fire, drew himself up proudly.

"So you see," he said softly to Du Plessis, "these also are no mud-eaters. We start now. Look to it, some of you, that those two who are my guests do not—lose themselves, for truly the night is dark."

There was a howl of appreciation at this, and the unwilling guides were strongly guarded. Not that they wished to escape now, for safety from the beasts of the night lay with Sibuya's followers, and they knew it. So they set out, the natives shouting and singing as is their custom when traveling at night, but making good progress none the less.

Still it was a weary and trying business, for night had fallen, and there was no moon. The natives picked their way unerringly across the broken country, but it was a full three hours before they sighted the dull red glow that told of a dying fire.

Du Plessis made his way to the front then hurried forward, the natives pressing after him. Clear against that glow he could make out a black shadow that moved a little. The natives saw it, too, and shouted afresh, but the crouching shadow moved no more, and they all heard the snarl that came from yet another spot away to the right.

Du Plessis called out a swift order and the shouting ceased. Quite unshaken he raised his rifle—his expensive and high-powered rifle—and waited just a breath till two points of green flickered in the darkness. Then came the sharp report followed by an ear-splitting roar; and in the next moment he had fired at the clear mark of the beast silhouetted against the glow of the embers. Something dragged itself into the long grass and lay there threshing about, snarling horribly.

The natives drew together at that and hung back, for no man could hope to face a wounded lion at night and live. But Du Plessis went straight on, and at his elbow was old Sibuya. For very shame they followed.

In the bush to their right there was a crackling of broken branches, and Du Plessis fired quickly three times and did not know, nor care, whether he had hit. He was more careful with the animal threshing about in the grass, for it was obviously too badly hit to get away, and therein lay its menace. He fired once—twice—at the sounds, and the snarling ceased abruptly. From some little distance came the horrible, laughing shriek of a hyena.

McCall was sitting up, the delirium of fever driven out by his long sleep and the

coolness of the night. He had wakened at the sound of the shooting.

"I've busted my leg," he announced bitterly as Du Plessis knelt beside him, holding a tin of water to his parched lips. Then, when his thirst was quenched, "I bet I'd have made Sibuya's kraal tomorrow, if you hadn't butted in."

Du Plessis said nothing, but beat a stick into flame and made a brief examination The ankle was swollen and discolored, but it was not the discoloration of mortification.

"Man," he said, with a vast sigh of relief, "you'll soon be all right. We'll fix up to carry you to Blakfontein. Dr. Pertings is a very good man when he's not drunk, and I promise he won't be drunk when he sees to you."

McCall swallowed once or twice, for his nerves were all jangled. He had heard the roaring of the wounded lion and knew just what it meant. Du Plessis had been perfectly right, and he had been a fool to travel alone. Also he had failed.

"Old pardner," he said, almost pleadingly, "I may be this and I may be that, but at least I'm *tough*, ain't I?"

They shook hands solemnly. Under Sibuya's direction the natives were already constructing a rough litter of branches, for time was precious if the leg was to be saved. At the first streak of dawn they must be away.

"Tough, like them iron rackets you was so keen about," McCall went on after an interval. "First thing when we get back I'm going to buy one of them for you, old man."

THE BEST SHOTS

by Raymond S. Spears

OF ALL rough-and-ready marksmen, I suggest that the Missouri Ozark mountaineers were the best in the United States. I speak especially of those in Taney, Christian and adjacent counties. Down to within twenty years, and probably to this day, the shooters there handled their revolvers better than any other district's gunmen that I ever heard of, individually and collectively.

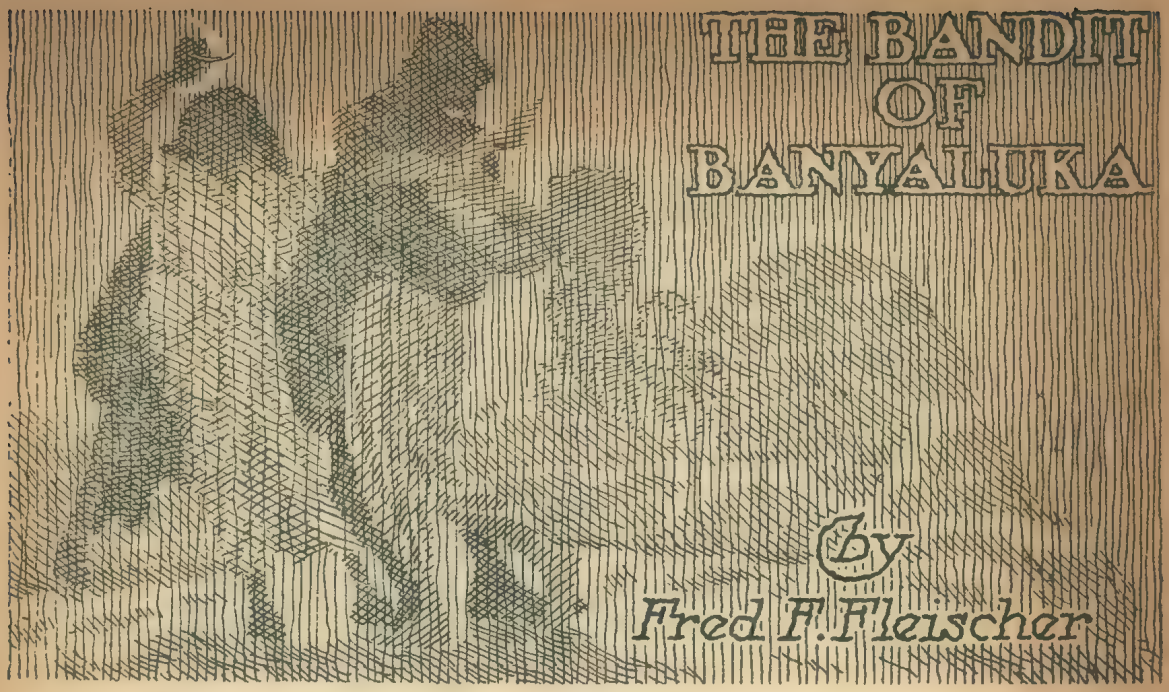
From Missouri, probably, came the best marksmen of the West, from Kit Carson's boyhood onward. Kentuckians salted the Missouri wilderness with their own skill.

In that particular district, the one covered by the Bald Knobber clan, the shooting was with meticulous accuracy. Two men fought; one put his bullet through the other's head, and followed that bullet with two others so close together that a dollar covered them; this, while the victim was falling.

Courage was at the base of the accuracy. They never shot from ambush. No bushwhacker, acting the coward, could shoot as well as the brave man who faced his enemy in the open. When, at a church one night, two enemies met, one, who had the advantage of being in the shadow cast by the moon, sprang forth into the bright light before he drew his gun and thus, all fair and square and in the open, the two fought—and the man who would not shoot even from a shadow was killed.

The practise in that land was to ride past trees at top speed, and then shoot the trifling marks on the bark. Quantrill's riders, and the upshoot bands of James, Younger and Cook—general terms, covering most Indian Territory desperadoes—and other badmen, had shooting characteristics of the Ozarks.

Sporadic marksmanship appeared elsewhere; a few good men gave a whole lot of mediocre shooters fame. Occasional good or lucky shots made the reputation of second-rate marksmen, but, as a region, with revolvers and derringers, the Ozarks were as great as Kentucky riflemen at their best.



THE BANDIT OF BANYALUKA

By Fred F. Fleischer

NAY, Effendi. I am a poor man and thine offer is generous, but I can not sell thee this dagger. I pray thee do not tempt me with these gold coins of thy country for which I would sell thee many things in my humble store, but not this dagger.

I know that there is nothing but the exquisite etching of the blade and the carved handle to speak for it and that these merits have caught thy fancy. The price thou hast set for it would more than cover its value, yet I can not sell it to thee, effendi, nor to any other man. There are many other things among my wares worthy of thine ownership.

Alas, there is a tale, Effendi, which I shall tell thee, and then thou wilt understand why I can not part with this trifling thing. Trifling in thine eyes, whom Allah has blessed with worldly goods, but priceless to me, Mehemed Ali, who owns but this insignificant stall in the bazaar of Bosna Seray.

There is *kuskus* for thee, Effendi and this *tchibouk*. Rest thy back against these cushions and listen to me. It is not often that I repeat this tale to strangers, but thou hast been kind to me and many things hast thou bought to take back to the land of thy fathers. May Allah bless thee with long life and may thine offspring increase like the goats on the mountains of Hercegovina.

It is now many years since the Austrians came to Bosnia, when Bosna Seray was but a small town and not the capital, and not so many since they have left it again. There was war on both occasions, but I had no part in it. The first time I was too young and the second time I was too old. Besides, Effendi, I am a peaceful man.

After the Austrians had come the first time, and had quelled the uprising with many soldiers and put garrisons in all the larger towns, they forthwith began to build roads and schools. But they did not penetrate into the mountains, not in the times of which I speak, and the town of Banyaluka was in the heart of a mountain district where they had but a small number of soldiers.

Word had come to the general who commanded at Bosna Seray, that a daring bandit was active in the mountain fastness around Banyaluka. The bazaar was full of tales, tales of cunning and dark deeds. The people were afraid of the bandit, but it was said that he did not harm the poor, but took his booty from the wagon trains of the Austrians which were sent to supply the garrison of Banyaluka.

It was also said that many a loaf of Svaba bread was eaten in the *hans* of the poor people in the mountains and that they also found flour and rice on their doorsteps in the mornings. All these were gifts of the bandit. Thus were the tales of the bazaar.

I was but a youth in those days and my face was still beardless. But I was strong

and made a living as *hamal*, which is a carrier of loads, in the employ of the Austrians, who were then building bridges across the Milyaka River. The engineer who built these bridges was a captain in the Austrian army, named Hessler Bey. I knew him well. His assistant was a lieutenant whose name was Kohlman. Strong was this man and tall. Taller than any of the Austrians who were part of the garrison of Sarajevo, as they called Bosna Seray.

One day, when I was resting at noon time in the shade of an olive tree, Kohlman Effendi approached me and began to ask me questions. Did I know the country west of Sarajevo? Had I ever traveled as far as Banyaluka and did I know the mountain trails?

My father's *han* stood on the Ponir plateau overlooking Banyaluka and well did Kohlman know what my answers would be.

To make a long tale short, Effendi, he engaged me as guide and promised to pay me well. We were to start afoot during the next morning. I was to meet him on the Banyaluka road, which leads out of Bosna Seray from the western gate.

The sun had just come over the Borya Planina when I passed through the gate, but there was no Austrian in sight, but a bearded moslem, a Hadshi, for he wore the green turban of the prophet.

Great was my surprize, Effendi, when he made himself known to me. It was Kohlman.

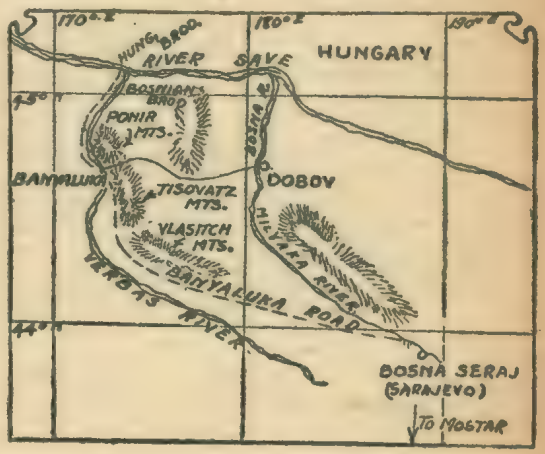
As we walked the many weary miles, he told me that he was going to catch the bandit of Banyaluka. This also surprized me, for the Austrians were never prone to tell their plans to the people of Bosnia, for there was little love for them in the hearts of the people. He gave me money, with the promise of a rich reward if I did his bidding.

I was poor then, Effendi, poorer than I am now, for I have never amassed riches and I accepted his offer and promised to guide him faithfully if he did not insist that I should raise my hand against my own people.

At this he laughed. He would take care of the bandit himself. I was to be his guide, naught else.

When we arrived at Banyaluka, he did not go to the commander of the garrison. We lived at the *han* of Yussuf Ibrahim, who felt honored to give shelter to a Hadshi and his follower.

Well did Kohlman speak the languages of the land. He knew both Turkish and Servian and so he was able to question the people about the bandit. The people answered him gladly, for they thought him to be a holy man who went into the mountains with his follower to meditate and to pray. It often aroused my anger to see



this infidel spread his prayer rug and turned his face toward Mekka. He did not pray, he merely went through the motions, in order to deceive the people. But he paid me well and I was a poor man. I held my tongue and bided my time.



THEN came days when I could show him no more. He knew the country as well as I did and he went out alone. I would spend my days in the coffee houses and in certain other places. Even in those days many troupes of Arabian performers came as far north as Banyaluka and they carried with them a number of dancers, which were known as *Ouled Nayls*. Those I loved to see, for I was young then, Effendi.

One day, Kohlman returned after an absence of three days. The deeds of the bandit were now a byword of the people and with the exception of the Austrians, no one paid much attention to his exploits, for he never harmed the people. As I have told thee, Effendi, he only robbed the military trains of the Austrians.

They had increased the guards for these trains and many soldiers walked alongside of the wagons and horses. In the beginning the bandit had boldly robbed during

the day, but now, it seemed, he came at night and, evading the sentries, took what he pleased. But he had never slain a man, which was good. For had he done that the Austrians would have sent many soldiers to catch him. What he did and what he stole, merely annoyed them and they did not think it worth while to concentrate many men in one place. They did not have so many soldiers, and then there was still unrest in the south.

This night, Kohlman took me with him. We went into the hills, south of Banyaluka and waited, behind the large boulders, alongside of the road over which the Austrian trains were traveling.

It was a dark night and great clouds sailed before the wind over the mountains. Midnight came and then we heard the creaking of wagon wheels and the breath of laboring horses, for it was a steep path. Then the column came in sight. Ten wagons there were, but no soldiers came with them, except those who sat on the wagons. Three men to each. As they approached us, Kohlman halted them. He spoke to the sergeant who was with the first wagon and this man shouted a command. The wagons were drawn up along the roadside and the horses were unspanned and driven a little ways off. Then the soldiers made fires and set up little tents. They placed no guards.

Then Kohlman returned to our hiding place. We could see the entire length of the wagon train, for the fires gave enough light. Except for the last two wagons, which loomed as black bulks in the shadows of the mountain, each of the remaining eight could be plainly seen. Our hiding place was directly above the ninth wagon.

Suddenly, a few small stones came down the mountain. Kohlman gripped my arm as I started to rise. Strong was his grip, Effendi, and he pulled me down. I listened. I could hear a faint sound, as if cautious feet were moving over the rocky ground. And then I saw.

A shadow passed across the road to the last wagon. A sound, ever so light, as if a knife were passed through the canvas covering the loads. After a few minutes, the shadow reappeared and it seemed that the figure carried something on its back. Noiselessly it disappeared up the mountain.

After a while Kohlman followed and I trailed after him. Just then the clouds lifted and we could see the figure ahead of us in the moonlight. It was but a quarter-moon, yet enough to disclose the lone man who carried a sack on his back up into the mountains of Banyaluka. A small man he was and not strong, for he was going slowly, bent under the heavy load.

We gained rapidly and then he heard us. He turned around and saw two men following, one, Kohlman, being of enormous size. The bandit dropped the sack as Kohlman started forward on the run and turning fled up the mountain.

But Kohlman was quicker. He followed in mighty leaps and when I came up to them, he had seized the bandit. A dagger gleamed in his hand but Kohlman seized his wrist and the dagger fell out of the bandit's hand. I picked it up.

Just then Kohlman laughed. It was an ugly laugh, Effendi. It conveyed to me something I did not, at the moment, understand, but came to me when I heard him say—

"A girl! A young girl at that!"

And then I saw. It was a girl, dressed as a man, but the tussle had loosened the turban she had worn and her black hair, long hair reaching below her waist, was streaming forth.

She struggled to gain her freedom, but she was helpless in Kohlman's arms. And then I realized what his ugly laugh had meant. I had heard of him in Bosna Seray—of broken lattice windows in the seraglio of many citizens—but it was bazaar talk to me then, and many things are told which have no more merit than a tale. But I saw and I did not move. I stared—I was young then, Effendi.

But the girl cried out:

"If thou are a Moslem, a Bosnian, help me! Wouldst thou let this infidel despoil a maiden of thy people?"

Her cry of despair awakened me. The dagger she had dropped lay at my feet. I do not know how it happened, Effendi, but there was a red mist before my eyes. My right hand struck and struck again and again. The dagger plunged through bone and flesh into Kohlman's back as he still held the girl against him. I do not know how often I struck, I was blinded by rage. When I had calmed down, there lay Kohlman at my feet. He did not move. His eyes were glassy and looked into the sky.

I remember that I wiped the dagger on the scarf around his waist before I realized that I had killed a man.



THE girl stood trembling, leaning against a rock. I picked up the sack she had dropped and it was heavy.

"Lead thou," I said to her, "and I will follow. I shall carry this sack for thee and then return to cast this carcass into the gorges of the Verbas River. No one will ever find it."

But the girl shook her head:

"There are soldiers below and I heard him talk to them before I stole up to the wagon. I did not know then that it was him, but I recognized the voice. They will be looking for him, if he does not return within two hours."

This I considered and I sat down to find a plan. The girl sat beside me, watching the road below. The soldiers could not be seen, but the glow of the fires was still high.

Finally I found a way out.

"Take this dagger," I said to the girl, "and cut my arm. My right arm. It must appear that I have fought with the bandit and that he did escape. Go back to your *han* and take this dagger with thee. Remember that it must be the last time that thou hast taken food from the Austrians. This dog has paid me well and given me a paper to the general who sits at Bosna Seray and a reward is coming to me. It is dark and I can not see thy face, but come to Bosna Seray where thou wilt find me at the house of Husref Beg, who is my uncle. By this dagger I shall know thee!"

Ere I could prevent her she had taken my hand and lifted it to her forehead.

"I too," she said, "can not see thy face, but I will find thee, O Defender of the virtuous. I am not a thief, I have but taken what was taken from the *han* of my father when the infidels came into this land. They burned the *han*, after taking bread and maize, and left my people to starve. I have taken from them but bread and flour and this sack contains no more than to even the score. I will take it to the mountains and then I shall come to Bosna Seray. I shall serve thee, O Protector of the poor."

Then she picked up the sack, forgetting what I had asked her to do. I called her back, repeating my request.

"I can not hurt thee, but I must do it, to save thee," she said in a voice that trembled with tears. And then she took the dagger out of my hand and drove it into my right arm. While I busied myself to stop the flowing blood, she had vanished.

I returned to the wagons and bade the soldiers to get the body of Kohlman. They did not believe my tale and turned me over to the commander at Banyaluka, who sent me under escort to Bosna Seray. The general heard my tale and when he saw my arm he believed me and called a doctor to dress my wound. When the arm had healed he gave me enough gold to buy this stall in the bazaar, which I stocked with the kind of goods which thou seest now, Effendi. Kohlman had written a paper stating that I had served him faithfully and I felt no desire to contradict him.

One day, after I had finished the noon meal, I was sitting in the door of my stall, when a woman approached me. She was veiled and I could not see if she was young or old, for the garments the women of my race were wearing at that time, Effendi, did not disclose a woman's figure.

I thought that she would buy some of these trinkets I had for sale and followed her into the stall, which was then just as dark as it is now, Effendi. It helps the trade, for one can not examine too closely and it is only men of thy race, or women, who insist upon light, afraid that they might be taken advantage of.

Within, the woman threw aside the folds of her garments and I beheld, even in the dimness of my stall, the slender form of a girl which had been on my mind ever since that night in the mountains of Banyaluka. From her sash she drew a dagger, and then I was certain.

Is that all of the tale?

Not quite, Effendi, but I do not believe that thou wouldst like to hear the details of the wedding which my uncle Husref Beg arranged and of the change that has befallen, Zorbeida, my wife, who was once a bandit. That is her voice now, effendi, scolding the neighbors, and it is not the same music which gladdened my ears in the mountains of Banyaluka where Kohlman had been slain.

And is this the reason why I would not sell thee this dagger?

Nay, Effendi, thou art wrong.

By keeping this dagger I am able to convince Zorbeida that I still love her, for

women are sentimental, Effendi, and easily offended. I know—for there are Arabian dancers in the coffee house of Ali ben Murzuk, on the lower banks of the Milyaka River and, Effendi, if thou wilt go with me this evening, I shall show thee one *Ouled Nayl*, who resembles Zorbeida, when she was young.

Ayee, but these women love gold—I have told thee, Effendi, that I am a poor man.

THE BEACHCOMBER

by Charles Nicholls Webb

TOWNS have not been good to me;
Men have not been kind;
Womenfolk that I have known,
Well—were not refined.
So I've come to rest awhile
On this fairy, palm-fringed isle;
Come to rest and dream and wait
For my ship that men call Fate.
For my ship, my dancing ship
With figurehead of gold,
Silken sails to tease the gales,
And rubies in her hold.

"He's a faithless vagabond,"
Do I hear you say?
"Singing songs of Samarkand,
Maund'ring of Cathay;
Fate may seek this sorry scamp,
As a rusty ocean tramp,
Ancient, dingy, fit to be
Lost in the Sargasso Sea.
Not a fairy, dancing ship
With figurehead of gold,
Silken sails to tease the gales,
And rubies in her hold."

Keep your smug religious creed,
Framed for proper folk.
Damn me as a vagabond,
Treat me as a joke.
Let me only rest and wait
For my ship, that some call Fate;
For my ship that means to me
More than immortality;
For my ship, my dancing ship,
With figurehead of gold,
Silken sails to tease the gales;
And rubies in her hold!



Author of "Hidden Blood," "The Lovable Liar," etc.

SOME poetical person once wrote:

For East is East and West is West.
And never the twain shall meet.

He was all wrong, that feller—all wrong. And I'll tell you how I know he was wrong.

I ain't no pessimist. Not by a danged sight, I ain't. If a little kid burns his fingers on a red-hot stove and keeps away from the fire from that time on, you don't call him a pessimist. That's me—burnt to a caution.

All the Harper tribe, as far back as I can figure out, was cautious. We bred more runners than we did fighters. Of course there ain't as many of us as there is Smiths. Smiths predominate, as it were. Anyway, the Smith tribe ain't got nothin' to do with this.

I ain't been in Piperock for several weeks. Me and "Dirty Shirt" Jones has been prospectin' back in the Whisperin' Creek hills, with our usual good luck—of gettin' back before all our food was gone. And we finds my pardner, "Magpie" Simpkins, settin' at the table in our shack, wearin' his Sunday clothes.

Magpie is so danged tall that it takes him all day to find out whether a certain pain is indigestion or inflammation of the knee-caps. He's solemn, Magpie is. And when that elongated, pious-faced cross between a scientific lecture and a —— fool statement gets pouches under his eyes and droops his eyelids like a blood-hound—caution cometh to me.

Magpie is writin'. He's got ink plumb to his elbow and the floor is plumb littered with paper. Does he welcome us effusively? Like —— he does. He just looks at us, kinda reprovin'-like, as if we should 'a' knocked.

"Well, you old cattywampus, howdy!" greets Dirty Shirt.

Dirty has one eye that kinda oscillates, as it were. Not bein' what an astronomer would call 'a fixed orbit,' it does a lot of jigglin' before it picks up what Dirty's lookin' at.

But it don't noways affect Dirty's aim, bein' as he shoots with both eyes open, and most of the time with both legs workin'. Magpie looks him over solemnly and says—

"Mr. Jones, I give you good afternoon."

Dirty spits in the general direction of the stove.

"I'll take it," says he.

"Mr. Harper," says Magpie dignified-like.

I kicks the door shut, slides my gun around where I can get it real quick and looks my old pardner over. He's shaved. Yeah, you can always tell when Magpie has shaved, because he's got so danged many

wounds. He's got on a celluloid collar—one of them kind that it ain't safe to smoke in. I can smell stove polish, which Magpie has used on his boots.

Take it all the way around, Magpie, Simpkins is a dude.

"You ain't got yore days mixed, have yuh?" I asked.

"Days mixed?"

He speaks like an actor—kinda runnin' the scale in G flat, as yuh might say.

"This ain't Sunday," says I.

"I am well aware of it."

"Then what's the idea of dressin' up thisaway?"

"The idea? Hah!" He kinda swells up with importance. "I'm the president."

I looks quick at Dirty, who is starin' at Magpie with his mouth wide open. Then he looks at me and shakes his head.

"Ike," says he hoarse-like, "I knowed it. By ——, the human brain can jist stand so much. He's been feeblin' up in the head for a long time. I've seen it comin' on by degrees, and I ain't a mite surprized. There ain't nothin' yuh can do, except to hopple 'em so they can't hurt nobody."

Magpie looks at Dirty kinda funny and Dirty edges toward the door.

"Better git a rope, Ike," advises Dirty, backin' again' the door. "Them high-minded first symptoms is apt to degenerate into vi'lence, and we don't want him to hurt nobody."

"Set down, you —— fool," says Magpie. "I ain't crazy."

"Proves it on himself," declares Dirty nervous-like. "They all swear they ain't. Look out for his first rush, Ike."

But I holds firm. To me he's always been crazy; so I ain't scared of an extra degree.

"Democrat or Republican president?" I asks. "We didn't git back in time for the convention, you remember."

"Don't try to be smart, Ike," says he. "I plumb forgot that you fellers has been away. Since you was here, Piperock has advanced by leaps and bounds. Right now I am writin' a biography of our fair city for all to read and appreciate how we have advanced. It is marvelous."

"What is? The biography?" asks Dirty.

"No—our advancement. Gentlemen, we are on the threshold of a wonderful era for Piperock. No more shall the rest of the world point a finger of scorn at our community. No more shall they say that Piperock is uncivilized, unbalanced. From this day henceforth we shall blossom like the rose. Our ideals shall and will be realized to the fullest extremity. How is that, Ike?"

"Fits in with what we've just heard," says I.

"And with the dawnin' of a new day—" Magpie squints at his paper—"all these—that's as far as I've got."

"And that's a —— of a long ways, if you ask me," said Dirty Shirt solemn-like.

"Now about bein' president," says I. "Yuh hadn't ought to go that far, Magpie."

"Hadn't I? Huh! That's who I am, Ike. Look upon me. I am the first president of the Piperock Chamber of Commerce."

"What the —— kind of a thing is that?" asked Dirty.

"Chamber of Commerce? Dirty Shirt, I'm surprized at you. It is an organization."

"It's the same thing as the Chamber of Horrors," says I, "only they deals in commerce mostly. This one will prob'ly have horrors as a side-line."

"Nothin' of the kind, Ike," protests Magpie. "Piperock is past the age of swaddlin' clothes. We has emerged into the sunlight and it will be well for all other cities to look to their laurels. I wouldn't be surprized to see Piperock one of the big cities of the world. We have everythin' to make it big."

"Yeah, we've got a lot of country," admits Dirty Shirt. "Me and Ike came across twenty miles of it today, and there was more beyond where we started from. If you want to go east, west, north or south from here yuh can find a lot of open country. We've got room to build, that's a cinch."

"But what would bring anybody here?" I asks. "Folks won't even come from Paradise, except to a dance; and then they come to pick a fight. We ain't got a —— of a lot to offer—except to somebody that wants trouble, Magpie."

"We will have, Ike. The idea was started in Paradise originally. Me and Wick Smith was down there last week and we went to see a tent show. It wasn't much good and it wasn't doin' no business. Me and Wick got to talkin' to the feller that owned the show and he told us all about his hard luck.

"He says that a circus is a drug on the market now, and that animiles ain't worth nothin', except in a zoo. He says that he's really surprized that some of our towns

don't have no zoo. He says they're all puttin' 'em in in the East, and that no town can ever be an attraction unless it's got a zoo.

"Well, me and Wick has a few drinks with him and got to talkin' it over with him. He says he's got the ingredients of a first-class zoological menagerie, and that he's got a idea of puttin' the proposition up to Paradise. He's got a elephant. Of course it ain't no first class elephant, bein' as it's kinda run down from travelin' so much.

"The camel is—well, it ain't noways in full plumage, but it's a camel. The tiger seems to be as good as tigers go. He says he'll take a thousand dollars for the whole bunch. 'Course he tells us how much we'd have to pay if we bought them animiles at retail price; but he kinda lumps 'em together and gives 'em to us at cost.

"Wick Smith is public-spirited, and after I tells him what we'll do about organizin' a Chamber of Commerce, he ups and buys them animiles on the spot. The feller throws in the cage free gratis for nothin'; so that saves us quite a lot. I figures that we can pick up a grizzly and a wolf and mebbe a mountain lion to kinda add to our zoo. Folks will come a long ways to look at wild animiles, Ike—a long ways."

Me and Dirty looks at each other and goes out to unpack, while Magpie goes ahead on Piperock's epitaph.



IT'S been quite a while since we put our foot on the rail; so we hurries up to Buck Masterson's saloon, where we runs into Wick Smith and "Mighty" Jones. Mighty and Dirty Shirt ain't no relation. Mighty is a little jigger, who thinks he's big enough to hold his own. That's one reason why Mighty is mostly always on crutches. He swears in a tenor voice and chaws his tobacco.

Buck greets us gladly, but Wick don't seem so happy.

"You fellers been prospectin' again'?" asks Buck.

"Yeah, and we're goin' ag'in," says Dirty Shirt. "This here town is gettin' too danged effete to suit me and Ike."

"It is effete," agrees Mighty. "Ain't been nobody killed for two weeks."

"Cheer up, brother," says Wick solemnlike. "There's allus a lull before a storm."

"You preparin' to massacre?" I asks.

"Well, I ain't been treated right," says Wick. "I done paid a thousand cold dollars for some jungle insects, and I'm wonderin' jist how I'm goin' to cash in on said contraptions. Magpie Simpkins got me drunk and talked me into bein' a public benefactor, dang his hide.

"Got me to procure the ingredients of a zoological garden, that's what he done. Got the whole —— town heated up over a thing he calls the Piperock Chamber of Commerce, and then goes out and gits himself elected president. That's a —— of a way to do, ain't it?"

"You wanted to be president, eh?" I asks.

"Well, ——, why not. I bought the —— thing, didn't I? Magpie said that Piperock would pay me back for it. How'll they do it, I'd like to know. Mebbe I'm supposed to raffle 'em off, eh?"

"I won't buy no chances," says Buck. "I've been down to the livery-stable and got a look at them there animals, and I'm free to state that I don't want none. Magpie orates that we'll have 'em to attract more folks to Piperock. My ——, that bunch will drive away what we've got."

"If I had that elephant," said Mighty, "I'd shore take a reef in him. His hide don't fit him no place. He ain't no attraction—he's a disgrace. From the rear he looks like 'Polecat' Perkins in his Sunday pants. Wick, you ort to give him a belt to take up the slack."

"That's why he's an attraction," declared Wick. "The feller I bought him from said that Gunga Din was a rare species of elephant. His name's Gunga Din. My ——, he ort to be good. I paid three hundred and thirty-three dollars and thirty-three and one-third cents for him. That camel and the tiger cost the same."

"I think that Magpie's crazy," say I.

"How about me?" wails Wick. "I paid for 'em myself."

"Yore wife's callin' yuh, Wick," observed Buck.

Wick squints toward the door and nods sadly.

"Yeah, I left her to run the store while I talks over my sorrow. Now I've got to go back and git —— agin'. She don't believe in Chambers of Commerce, she don't; and I'm commencin' to wonder if she ain't right."

Wick pilgrims across the street, while me

and Dirty goes down to the livery stable to see what Wick bought. "Hassayampa" Harris is runnin' the stable.

"Howdy, Hassayampa," says I. "How are you?"

"Liver trouble," says he, diagnosin' himself. "Spots before m' eyes, dizziness and kinda sluggish-like."

He does look kinda pale and walks antegodlin'.

"How comes you to git them there symptoms?" asks Dirty.

"Ignorance," says Hassayampa. "I tried to take a bale of hay away from Exhibit A of the Chamber of Commerce."

"Meanin' Gunga Din?"

"That accordion-skinned thing," says Hassayampa painful-like, kinda pluckin' at his Adam's apple. "I ain't jist right in m' mind yet. It grabbed me by the slack of the pants and took m' pants plumb off while I'm still in the air. Them kinda shocks ain't noways good for the human form. Then the —— thing slapped me across the face with my own pants and knocked me plumb across the stable and into the oat-bin. I ain't been right since."

"You ort to read up on things like that," says Dirty.

"Read? What in —— can a man read at a time like that?"

"Wasn't there no directions with 'em?" I asks.

"No. Direction don't mean nothin' to a thing like that, Ike. Do you want to gaze upon 'em?"

"Yeah, we'll look," nods Dirty.

"Cost two-bits per each," informs Hassayampa. "Magpie says they're worth it—and they are. My ——, there ain't no questions about it."

"That's a —— of a idea!" snorts Dirty. "Two-bits to see a elephant. I'll tell you what we will do, Hassayampa; we'll pay the two-bits to see you try to take another bale away from Gunga Din."

"You never will," sighs Hassayampa. "I'm cured. Anyway, I'm about half out of hay. I've got a bill of seven dollars agin' them critters right now. By golly, that tagger c'n go plumb to ——. Meat costs money."

We left Hassayampa talkin' to himself and went back up town, where we leans on Buck's bar.

We ain't been there long when Mike Pelly, Ricky Henderson and "Old Testament" Tilton rides in from Paradise. Mike is the saloon-keeper and Ricky runs the barber shop. The third member of this here trio represents the other element of Paradise.

Testament looks a heap like some old buzzard that had been disappointed in love. He wears one of them beetle-backed coats, a pair of pants that sure follers the contour of his skinny legs and a pair of boots that sag a heap at the top and shows that Testament don't noways pinch his feet.

Mike parts his hair on one side, slicks one side down until she almost reaches the bridge of his nose, where it retreats some sudden-like. He smells a heap of heel-yuh-tripe perfume.

Ricky is a barber. He looks, smells and acts like one. When he gets excited he applauds, like he was stroppin' a razor. Testament used to think that he had snatched Ricky and Mike from the burnin'. When Testament first comes to that country he has an idea that there was a lot of brands to snatch from the burnin'; but he got scorched a few times and let things go as they lay.

Them three angles up to the bar, shakes hands with us, just like they cared to meet us, and asks us to drink. Testament has his usual lemonade and a wink, and then we discusses conditions.

"How is everythin' in this village of iniquity?" asks Testament kinda off-handed.

"Iniquity, ——!" snorts Buck. "There ain't no iniquity in Piperock. We're clean-minded and antiseptic of condition. If there's any infection in this city it's brought here from Paradise. By golly, some day you'll be glad to be knowed as bein' a suburb of Piperock City."

"Haw - haw - haw - haw!" says Ricky. "Suburb of Piperock. Paradise will be a mee-trop-polis when Piperock goes back to the prairie-dogs."

It's difference of opinion that makes horse races, wars and so many kinds of whisky—all out of one barrel. Me and Dirty Shirt are plumb full of civic pride, and we're willin' to fight for our fair city—if we had one—but Piperock and Paradise ain't worth no supreme effort; so we slides out kinda graceful-like and pilgrims back to our shack.

Magpie is just goin' away, carryin' complete dignity and a lot of stationery. I tells him about the three men from Paradise.

"The word has reached," says Magpie,

swellin' his chest. "We shall not hide our light under a bushel."

"Then you better hide yore carcass behind a wood-pile," says Dirty Shirt. "Them three antagonizers didn't jist ride up here to git a drink of liquor."

"We are a peaceable aggregation," says Magpie. "No more shall the war-cry sever, nor the runnin' rivers be red. We are about to shed the things that have held us back. Uncivilization must bow to the tread of wisdom. The wheel of progress is turnin', and woe unto him who gits under the tire. The people of Piperock have risen in their might, unleashed the bonds which have held them in darkness and are comin' out into the light of a new day."

"And," says Dirty kinda awed-like," if that ain't a —— of a lot to say all in one bunch, I'll eat the garment that made me famous."

Magpie snorts and pilgrims on up the street. In spite of the mighty proclamation he emits to us, I notices that he's got a six-gun shoved into the waistband of his pants. Me and Dirty stretches out on the two bunks and rolls up a little sleep.



IN THE course of human events some queer things happen. And the queerest thing I can think of is the fact that Jasmine Greenbaum came to teach school at Piperock. Jasmine ain't the kind you'd imagine would take a job like that.

She's plumb decorative, if yuh know what I mean. I ain't goin' to describe her, 'cause I ain't got words enough. Her eyes would make a man lift his head when somebody is shootin' at him. She lives with Wick Smith's family while she's teachin' the young of Piperock to not shoot at each other.

Me and Dirty runs into her that evenin' after we've been stationary at Buck's bar for an hour or more. Dirty's active eye jiggles convulsive-like for a while, and he seems to be wearin' about six too many hands.

"I'm sure you remember me," says she, smilin' at us.

"If I lives to be a million, I won't forget," pants Dirty.

"I am Mister Harper," says I. "And the Harper fambly has the longest memories of any fambly on earth."

"Outside of the Jones's," says Dirty. "My old pa could remember before they started puttin' aces in the decks of cards."

"Memories don't figure," says I. "We're glad to meetcha, Miss Greenbaum. What can I do for yuh, ma'am?"

"Same here," says Dirty, kinda elbowin' me aside.

"I told them that you were always willing to do anything for the public good," says she, smilin' sweet-like.

"To whom did yoo tell this, ma'am?" I asks.

Somehow I kinda gets a hunch that everythin' ain't just right.

"Mr. Simpkins, the president of the Chamber of Commerce," says she. "He and Mr. Smith seemed to think——"

"Since when did they start thinkin'?" asks Dirty. "That shore is a novelty to my ears, ma'am."

"Mr. Simpkins is a very brilliant man," says she. "He has some wonderful ideas."

"With parts missin'," says I.

"Perhaps you do not appreciate what he is doing for Piperock, Mr. Harper," says she. "I have just come from a meeting of the new Chamber of Commerce, where Mr. Simpkins presided and read us some wonderful plans for the betterment of this town.

"As you know we already have the nucelus of a zoological garden. Mr. Smith, who is heart and soul in the advancement of Piperock, purchased these three jungle animals. Our meeting this afternoon was to decide upon a plan to reimburse Mr. Smith and to acquire the animals for the city.

"Next Monday is Labor Day. I have been lead to understand that Piperock has never celebrated Labor Day."

"They've sure celebrated everythin' else," says Dirty Shirt. "My ——, ma'am, don't let 'em celebrate. You don't know Piperock."

"It will be a harmless celebration. I spoke about having you two gentlemen assist, and Mr. Simpkins and Mr. Smith assured me that neither of you had any civic pride. They said that both of you were uncivilized, unprogressive and not at all in accord with any movement that would curb your savage tendencies. I'm sure it is prejudice on their part."

"Yo're danged right!" says Dirty. "Them pelicans sure did lie to you in fine shape, ma'am. Piperock don't mean a whole lot to either one of us, but I'm willin' to do anythin' yuh say."

I'm cautious, as I said before. This here idea of havin' a pretty school teacher come to us and hoodle us into doin' somethin' that our hearts tell us is dangerous don't set so good. I've heard this same kind of stuff before, and so has Dirty; but any old time a pretty girl smiles at Dirty, it's just another old Garden of Eden and a lot of apples.

She don't tell us what we're supposed to do, but she does ask us to promise to help 'em out. Well, what can yuh do in a case like that? Me and Dirty goes back to Buck's place, where we massages our insides with Buck's Best.

And lemme tell you somethin'—Buck's liquor sure tempers the wind to the sheared sheep. Ten years ago he bought a barrel of it. He sells on an average of two or three gallons a day, and that barrel is still over half-full. It has never weakened, as far as we can taste.

After while Magpie and Wick comes into the place. Dignified? My ——, they act like a pair of royal flushes.

"Greetin's, Mr. Masterson," says Magpie lofty-like. "How goes things this day and date?"

"Well, all right," says Buck, bein' kinda dazed. "How did the meetin' go?"

"Perfect," says Magpie. "The die is cast. The ladies' auxiliary is in complete accord with us and we all feel that it will be a day to date time from. Piperock will emerge from her shell and take her place among the cities of the world."

"The ladies' what?" asks Dirty.

"Auxiliary," explains Wick. "My wife is president. It is an a-ad—uh——"

"Adjunct," prompts Magpie.

"I know it," says Wick. "There's my wife, who is president, and the followin', to wit: Mrs. Wick Smith, Mrs. Pete Gonyer, Mrs. Yuma Yates, Mrs. Mighty Jones, and Miss Hilda Hansen. Of course the list is not complete, as it were, and we expect more. However, we have a quorum, et cettery, *ad libitum*."

"I s'd hope sho," says Dirty, gettin' dignified. "What 'bout Mish Jasm'n Greenbaum? Ain't she invited t' j'in?"

"Miss Jasmine Greenbaum is actin' in an advisory capacity," explains Magpie. "It kinda makes her feel free to do as she wishes. We're leavin' a lot of it to her imagination."

"What was Testament and Ricky and Mike doin' up here?" asks Buck.

"Kinda gropin' around," says Magpie. "They heard that we was due to progress, and of course they had to come and see what it was about. I told 'em about Piperock acquirin' a Chamber of Commerce and three jungle curiosities. They don't sabe the idea of the Chamber, but they offers to take the animals at a slight advance over what Piperock paid."

"What did you say?" asks Wick anxious-like.

"I told 'em to go to ——. Them animals ain't for sale."

"Ain't they?" asks Wick. "At more'n I paid? Magpie, I'd like to have the say-so over them critters myself. I own 'em, don't I? They ain't Piperock's animals until Piperock has a bill-of-sale for 'em. I sure as —— don't thank yuh for what you've done to me."

"Where's yore public spirit?" asks Magpie.

"Thassall right," complains Wick. "I've got more public spirit than most folks, I reckon; but a thousand dollars is a thousand dollars. If Paradise wants to pay me more'n I paid—they git 'em, by gosh!"

"You'd make a fine president for the Chamber of Commerce," says Magpie.

"All right," says Wick. "If you can think of anythin' else that's funny, I'll listen."

"Yore livestock are eatin' up dollars," says I.

"Yeah, and that's another thing," wails Wick, pawin' at Magpie's sleeve. "Who's goin' to pay their board?"

"Gunga Din eats a bale of hay every fifteen minutes," offers Dirty Shirt solemn-like.

"He—he does?"

"He—he do," nods Dirty. "The last bale was two pounds short; so Gunga Din ate Hassayampa's pants for dessert. Them there tigers will eat a whole cow for a meal and you know what cows are worth right now."

"Magpie—" Wick is almost cryin' by this time—"Magpie, I asks you as a friend—what'll I do?"

"Have patience, Wickie."

"Have ——! I'll go down there and massacree all three of them monstrosities, that's what I'll do, by gosh!"

"And lose yore thousand dollars, eh?" Magpie shakes his head. "Wick Smith, you ain't hardly fit to help us build up Piperock."

"It's for the glory of our fair city," says Buck.

Wick turns around and walks out. He's kinda all choked up, but I know danged well it ain't emotion. Me and Dirty feels that the fair city of Piperock ain't so badly in need of our assistance; so we saddles up our rollin' stock and goes to Paradise town.



PARADISE runs a dead heat with Piperock, as far as city is concerned. When P. T. Barnum said that a fool is born every minute, he might have added that they were all pointed toward Yellowrock County.

We finds several of the above in Mike Pelly's saloon, and among them is "Chuck" Warner, "Muley" Bowles, "Telescope" Tolliver and Henry Clay Peck. These four disgraces are from the Cross J ranch, but claims Paradise as their native haunt. Also we finds "Liniment" Lucas and "Tombstone" Todd and "Hard-Pan" Hawkins.

Tombstone is so tough that he can wear tight boots on his bunions, and "Hard-Pan Hawkins keeps books on his crimes. Tombstone draws me aside and gnaws on one end of his mustache, while he cuffs his sombrero plentiful.

"Ike," says he hoarse-like, "what's this I'm hearin' about the hamlet of Piperock? Somebody was a-tellin' me that they've convened up there to respectablize the town somewhat."

"It's kinda hard to per-fume the rose," says I.

Tombstone gnaws a little more and fights his hat.

"Yeah, I s'pose that's right, Ike. Are you and Dirty Shirt part and parcel of this here movement?"

"Not knowin'ly, Tombstone," says I. "You can speak to me with perfect confidence and go away feelin' that I won't exaggerate what you've told me."

"There has been braggin' goin' on," stated Tombstone. "If there's anythin' Paradise hates it's braggin'. Piperock orates that she's leapin' ahead like a bee-stung bear. She ain't, Ike. It jist ain't no ways possible for her to leap thataway. She ain't active like Paradise. We're able to do things.

"Whereabouts in —— does Piperock compare with Paradise, I asks yuh to answer honestly? She don't. We've got spirit, climate and brain power. We've got courageous men, wimmin and children. Why, our offspring are equal to two grown men of Piperock. We've got everythin', Ike."

"Except a elephant, a camel and a tiger," says I.

"What's them amount to?"

"And a Chamber of Commerce, Tombstone."

"Mm-m-m, yeah. Well?"

"Well — right back at yuh. I never started this argument."

"It ain't no argument, Ike," he explains. "Paradise is the legitimate place for them things. We could do it up right."

Tombstone invites me back to the bar, which I accepts. Dirty is arguin' with the Cross J outfit and Liniment Lucas, and from Dirty's talk I'd gather that he's body and soul with Piperock.

"From this day henceforth, Piperock shall rossom like a blose," orates Dirty Shirt. "The people of Piperock have rosin in their might, and we are comin' out into the dight of a lew day. And if that ain't a —— of a lot to say at once, I'll eat the garment that made me what I am today."

From that time on things get kinda hazy. Mike Pelly peddles a brand that would make a cotton-tail rabbit grow fangs in his mouth and rattles on his tail. I'm led to understand that Paradise is jealous of Piperock, and that Paradise hankers for them three animals, like a calf hankerin' for its ma.

Me and Dirty balances on the edge of the sidewalk in front of Mike's place and begins to cheer for Piperock, when some careless son of a gun moved a heavy chair plumb out of Mike's doorway and it hits me and Dirty Shirt at the same time.

And when we woke up we finds ourselves in jail. Hank Padden, our estimable sheriff, tells us that we're in jail for disturbin' the peace.

"You be ——!" wails Dirty Shirt. "Paradise never had no peace to disturb. I can prove it to any judge, jury or collection of folks which has two ideas above a monkey."

"I done my duty," says Hank firm-like. "I was hired for this kind of work. You'll prob'ly git six months apiece."

This was sure cheerin' news. The Paradise jail don't feed none too good. We had a idea that Piperock would arise in its wrath and come down to drag us forth—but

they didn't. I sent word to Magpie, and he answered it.

I sent him this word—

Me and Dirty Shirt are in jail
for upholdin' Piperock.

And this is what he sent to me—

Good for you. We appreciate
yore civic pride.

He didn't sign his name, but he didn't need to. I sabe that *hombre* like a book. Dirty gets kinda gloomy over it all and swears that he's all through with Piperock. Right there and then I adds my voice to his.

"If that's patriotism," says Dirty, "gimme death. Our own town has turned us down, Ike Harper. I didn't think they'd do it. And they wouldn't, if they wasn't gettin' civilized."

A little later on cometh Chuck Warner, Liniment Lucas and Testament Tilton.

"You can take the preacher back," says Dirty. "We ain't in for murder, you know."

"I'm not in my clerical capacity," says Testament. "Be ye both of good cheer."

"—— of a fine chance, the way Hank runs his place here," snorts Dirty.

"I've been up to Piperock," says Chuck, wigglin' his ears. Chuck's got flexible ears and he can wiggle 'em like a mule.

"And nobody shot yuh?" gasps Dirty. "My gosh, they're sure gittin' forgivin', Chuck."

"They ain't no friends to you two," says Chuck seriouslike. "They're glad yo're in jail down here."

Chuck Warner is the biggest liar west of the Atlantic Ocean—but this time I believed him.

"Magpie and Wick Smith hope yuh stay in jail," says he.

"It kinda looks like they'd git their hopes," Dirty acts kinda mournful.

"It kinda does," agrees Liniment.

He's got one of them long, wet-lookin' noses and sad eyes. I reckon his folks intended him to be a undertaker, but Old Lady Fate had "horse-thief" marked after his name in the Big Book.

"Is this here a party of condolence, or did yuh come to gloat?" I asks. I hate like —— to have folks lookin' at me through the bars.

"Condolence and good cheer," says Testament, hitchin' up his pants. "You might call it a parley. I will go now, as it would not be meet for me to be party to it. Not that I ain't in accord with it entirely, you understand."

"It sure must be a tough proposition to drive you away," observed Dirty.

Old Testament pulled out, Hank unlocks the cell door, and they all comes in.

And what follered kinda touched upon my heart-strings. It was Chuck's idea. I listened to Chuck, Hank and Liniment Lucas, as they unfolds what's on their minds. It has been said that every man has his price. Ours was one elephant, one camel and a tiger.

They wants us to steal them three animals for Paradise. All we've got to do is to hand 'em over to Paradise and all is forgiven. But they're square about it, at that; they will pay Wick Smith what he paid for 'em; and give us a hundred apiece.

"And Piperock ain't treated you two square," says Chuck.

"Thassall right," says I, "but yuh can't get away with any thing like that, Chuck. It wouldn't be hard for Piperock to prove that they owned 'em, 'cause they're all there is of the species in Yaller Rock County."

"We've fixed that all up," says Chuck. "Don'tcha worry about that end of it. You fellers go back home, feelin' sore at Paradise, and nobody will expect yuh to raid the zoo; *sabe?*"



WE WENT home, after swearin' to do our little best, and we finds Magpie in the shack, composin' some more stuff. We don't say nothin' about his kind note to us, and he don't mention it to us.

"Still tryin' to uplift Piperock on paper?" I asks.

"Combatin' a evil influence, Ike. We are the pioneers—others foller. Some one is tryin' to steal our thunder."

"You got plenty of it," declares Dirty. "They could swipe a lot of it from you and still leave enough for a dozen men."

"Sarcasm is the weapon of the ignorant," says Magpie. "What heard ye in Paradise?"

"Nothin' much."

"No? Huh. Did yuh know that Paradise is emulatin' us—or is goin' to?"

"All fools ain't dead yet," opines Dirty Shirt.

"They've ordered a elephant, camel and a tiger," says Magpie. "They're payin' a big

price for 'em, just to keep Piperock from leadin' the procession. Telescope Tolliver and Muley Bowles told us about it today. Telescope said he thought we ought to know about it."

"Yeah, we heard about it," says Dirty Shirt, kinda off-handed like. "It didn't mean nothin' to us."

"Well, we're holdin' a indignation meetin' tomorrow night," says Magpie. "We aims to protest openly against such practise. It ain't ethical. You and Ike be there, will yuh? Up in the Mint Hall. The ladies auxiliary will be there, et cettery. We don't wish for blood to be spilled. It's ag'in our principles and regulations; but, by grab, they'll go too far pretty soon—and have to get helped back."

The next day is kinda quiet in Piperock; but when Piperock is quiet she's dangerous. Wick Smith ain't at the store, and Mrs. Smith ain't got much use for me and Dirty; so we keep away. After samplin' some wobble water we pilgrims down to the livery-stable to see how Hassayampa is comin'.

But we don't find Hassayampa in charge. Wick Smith meets us at the door, and he looks as wise as a owl.

"Whatcha want?" he asks.

"Whatcha got?" asks Dirty.

Wick clears his throat kinda hoarse-like.

"I've got civic pride, by ——!"

"You've showed it, Wick," says I.

"Uh-huh. If I had more sense and less pride I'd be better off. Hassayampa Harris hands me a bill for thirty-six dollars' worth of feed—and I got so —— full of pride that I kicked him out and took charge.

"My ——, that elephant is jist like a hay-baler. Yuh can't fill it up, I tell yuh. And he was feedin' Cleo-patree meat! Can yuh beat that? Cleo-patree is the tiger. That son of a gun has cost me one hundred dollars per stripe."

"Wick," says I, "wouldst be rid of 'em?"

Wick looks at me for quite a while, spits painful-like and nods slowly.

"Wouldst."

"I can get yuh a thousand dollars for the layout."

"Ike, I hope yuh ain't lyin' to me."

"C. O. D.," says I.

"That's the joker," says he kinda wailin'. "C. O. D., eh? How in —— can yuh deliver a thing like these, I'd ask you? Half of Piperock is guardin' this here stable. Over across the street is Pete Gonyer. Farther down the street is Mighty Jones, and up the other way is Olaf Hansen. One of them three has his eye on this place. They're watchin' to see that Paradise don't come and take them things away.

"And at night they're guardin' this place with sawed-off shotguns. They heard that Paradise was goin' to take away the menagerie; that's what they heard."

"It's kinda easy to see why Paradise wants to shift the job to me and Dirty Shirt Jones," says I. "Can't yuh do as yuh want to with yore own animals?"

"I can't," wails Wick. "Magpie got me drunk, Judge Steele wrote out a option—and I signed it. I can't sell until thirty days after Labor Day. By that time I'll be in the poor house."

"What do these here animals look like?" asks Dirty.

Wick leads up back in the stable and makes us used to the dangdest lookin' trio of animals I ever seen. Cleopatra is in a cage on wheels, and if there ever was a meaner-lookin' tiger I've never seen it. She's jist skin and bones and a big mouth full of teeth.

The camel opens his mouth and grins at us, kinda asthmatic-like. His name is Sahara, and he looke like ——. It is wasn't for his humps he'd look like a moth-eaten burro.

"Here's the *e pluribus peritonitis*," says Wick, pointin' at the next stall. "There stands Gunga Din. I tied the son of a gun up a while ago."

We steps over and takes a close look. It's kinda dark in that stall.

Whap!

Somethin' hit me in the face and I done a foot-race backward plumb to the rear door, where I hits my shoulders first, followed by the rest of my anatomy, makin' a sound like the couplin'-up of an engine on a train of cars. Kinda *clunkety, clinkety, clank!*

Through the haze I sees Dirty Shirt fade out through the front doorway, and I seen Wick Smith climb up a post, where he hangs harness. He got hold of the harness peg and tries to lift himself up; but the peg busted and he landed back on the floor under two sets of heavy harness.

I got up and went weavin' down the stable, feelin' kinda light and airy. I seen Wick come up from under that harness and go gallopin' out of the place with a horse

collar around his neck and a set of tugs sailin' out behind, holdin' a hame in each hand, like a man carryin' two flags.

I fell down twice before I got outside, where I found Dirty and Wick. Wick got a tug caught in the sidewalk and ain't got sense enough to let loose of the hame. There he is, yankin' and haulin', while Dirty is standin' in front of him, legs wide apart, wavin' his hat in Wick's face and yellin'.

"Whoa! Whoa! Whoa, you —— fool!"

I fell over the tug and sat down on the edge of the sidewalk. Dirty manages to get Wick calmed down, and we looks each other over. Dirty has got a pair of sleeves on, but no shirt. His jiggly eye does a lot of cavortin', as he looks at me.

"I never expected to see any of us alive," says he.

"You don't need to start cheerin'," says I. "What in —— was the matter, Wick?"

"Ignorance!" snorts Dirty. "If I didn't know any more natural history than that I'd hang my head in shame, Wick. You tied him up, did yuh? Well, by golly you ort to find out which is the head end of a elephant. You tied him by the tail."

"Well, I-I-I-I tut-tied him," wails Wick. "Ends don't mean nothin' to me. They both hang down. The only danged way I can tell which is which is to give it some hay and see which end turns toward it. He didn't kill either one of yuh, did he?"

"Don't give Gunga Din any credit," says I. "If that back door hadn't been shut I'd be in Canada right now. Go back and make pets of them things, if you must, but spare me from havin' anythin' more to do with 'em."

We helped Wick back into the stable, stole a bottle of horse liniment and went home to recuperate. Dirty walks like his rudder was cramped just a little, and I'm kinda reared back to take the strain off my shoulders, hips and ankles.



IT WAS kinda late that evenin' when me and Dirty limped up to the Mint Hall and found Piperock assembled. Magpie is on the platform, and the argument seems to be gettin' warm. On the platform with him is Mrs. Wick Smith and Miss Jasmine Greenbaum. When she sees us, she hops off the platform, comes and leads me and Dirty up to the front of the room and asks us to sit down.

"These two gentlemen have offered to help me in this," says she. "They have the interests of Piperock at heart. I know they are brave and full of courage, and for that reason I have selected them."

"Brave and full of courage!" snorts Yuma Yates. "Full of rheumatism, from the way they walk."

"I'm goin' to remember most everythin' I hear said here," says Dirty. "That's remark number one, Yuma."

"My list shows number one for Yuma Yates," says I.

Magpie hitches up his belt and moves to the edge of the platform, where he glares at me and Dirty Shirt.

"Threats are out of order," he tells us. "Piperock is passin' from such things. From now onward we are promoters of brotherly love—not battle. Heed this and save yourself trouble. We welcome both to the fold, and thank yuh for offerin' yore assistance to Miss Greenbaum. Sincerely yours, Piperock Chamber of Commerce."

"In reply to yore letter of today," says I, "I can say that yore fold don't appeal to us; so am sendin' it back by return mail. Sincerely yours, Ike Harper and Dirty Shirt Jones. P. S. And if you don't know what I mean—ask us."

Magpie glares at us for several moments and then turns to Miss Jasmine.

"Miss Greenbaum," says he, "I told you that I was sure them two jiggers was drunk when they offered to help yuh. Probably they'll deny ever sayin' it now."

Dirty Shirt hops to his feet.

"Magpie Simpkins, yo're a—a—exaggeratin' things. By golly, we said we'd help Miss Greenbaum, and we'll do it. Anythin' she asks us to do is jist the same as done. Ain't that right, Ike?"

"Well," says I, "I hate to have anybody doubt that I don't know what I'm sayin'—drunk or sober. I'm with you, Dirty."

"I knew it," says Miss Greenbaum. "I knew they would do it for me. It isn't often that I make a mistake in human nature. When I first saw these two gentlemen, something told me that they were to be depended upon. Mr. Harper and Mr. Jones, I thank you."

"Yo're welcome," says Dirty. "You sure are awful welcome."

"Well, now that we've settled that part

of it, I move that we adjourn. Tomorrow will be spent in preparin' things. We've got a lot of work to do. 'Scenery,' you'll bring yore autymobile in tomorrow?"

Scenery Sims admits that he will. Scenery is a little, thin son of a gun, with a E-string voice, and owns the only horseless vehicle in Yaller Rock County.

"The ladies will be busy on their costumes," says Magpie, "and there will be much decoratin' to be did. The time is kinda short to complete all the details; but it is goin' to be the biggest thing ever pulled off in the West. Our grandchildren will be proud of us."

"Yours won't be," says Dirty Shirt.

It's kind of a mean remark, bein' as Magpie never was married. Nobody laughed, but those directly behind us kinda eased themselves aside out of the line of fire.

Magpie shook his head and polished the nail of his trigger finger on his right ear.

"We've got to be meek," says he. "'The meek shall inherit the earth.'"

"That won't be a —— of a lot of fun, if there ain't nothin' but meek ones left," says I.

"There'll be a —— of a lot of earth to divide, too," says Dirty Shirt.

And that's all we knew about the meetin'. I've got a hunch that Dirty spoke up too quick. I told him that they've been arguin' about me and him before we got there, but he don't care. There ain't a chance to steal them animals for Paradise, even if we was so inclined—which we ain't—so we decided to let nature take its course.

Early the next mornin' we finds Magpie paintin' a big sign. He ain't noways artistic, but readable. At the top is one word, in letters two feet high—

PAGEANT

And just below that is two more big words—

OF PROGRESS

"What's that, Magpie?" asks Dirty Shirt.

"Depictin'," says Magpie, wipin' some black paint out of his mustache, "the progress of Piperock. Pageant means a high-toned parade. There has been parades before, but this is the first pageant. If you two fellers will go up to Wick Smith's house you'll prob'ly find Mrs. Smith and Miss Greenbaum workin' on yore costumes. They was goin' to make 'em first thing today."

"Our costumes?" I asks. "Whyfor costumes for us, Magpie?"

"Have to have 'em, Ike."

"Oh, well, if we have to have 'em."

Me and Dirty spells out the next thing on the list:

WHEN EAST MEETS WEST
THE EAST IS AMAZED AT THE PROGRESS OF THE WEST

THEY MINGLE LIKE BROTHERS

THE COMING OF THE WHITE MAN
VICTORY

THE SPIRIT OF PIPEROCK—
PROGRESS

DON'T FORGET THE BIG DANCE
AT THE MINT HALL

THATCHER'S
COMBINED ORCHESTRA
WILL FURNISH THE STRAINS
AND SCENERY

SIMS WILL DO THE CALLIN

COME ONE AND ALL

TWO DOLLARS PER EACH
WILL COVER
THE PAGEANT AND DANCE

PIPEROCK
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

MAGPIE SIMPKINS,
President

We found Wick Smith at the store. He hoodled Hassayampa into takin' charge of the animals again and is runnin' his own store; but he ain't cheerful.

"Tomorrow is Labor Day," says he with tears in his voice. "I ort to be happy, I s'pose, 'cause the proceeds of the pag-unt is to help pay me for them animals; but somehow I can't seem to rend the veil, as Old Testament says, and see the silver linin'."

"Aw, it'll be all right," says Dirty. "Parades ain't much to worry about."

"Thasso?" Wick squints at Dirty. "You've survived some of our parades, ain't yuh, Dirty?"

"Yeah, but you've got to figure that Piperock is civilized. It ain't noways what she used to be, Wick. Right now Piperock is meek and mild."

"I'll betcha," nods Wick. "Well, I still has hopes, but—I dunno. I can't quite figure out my wife lookin' like a statoo of

Victory, nor I can't figure out Mrs. Pete Gonyer and Mrs. Mighty Jones depictin' Progress. My ——, my wife don't look like Victory."

"You ain't never won a battle from her yet, have yuh?" I asks.

"No, that's a cinch. Well, mebbe it'll be all right. You fellers ain't got no easy chore yoreselves."

"We ain't?" I asks. "What have we got to do with it, Wick?"

"You two depicts the East, Ike. Anyway, that's what they've proclaimed for yuh."

"——, I don't look like no East!" snorts Dirty.

"I don't think I do either," says I. "Anyway, I ain't seen nobody from the East that looks a —— of a lot like me. How does she come that we're inflicted with this idea, Wick?"

"Don't ask me. My ——, it ain't none of my doin's. I've got all the grief I can stand. You better ask Magpie or Jasmine. They fixed it all up between 'em."

"Do we wear costumes?" asks Dirty.

"Search me. My wife does. Mosquito-bar! My ——, can yuh see my wife in a mosquito-bar dress?"

"I'd like to," says Dirty.

And then we left. Wick hadn't ought to be so finicky. His wife is about five feet four inches tall and weighs two hundred and fifty. She also wheezes considerable in her talk. Mrs. Gonyer is six feet two inches tall, and so danged thin that she rattles when she walks. Mrs. Mighty Jones ain't no taller than Mrs. Smith, and she don't weigh a hundred.



ME AND Dirty don't get much satisfaction around that town. Magpie goes to Paradise to advertise the affair, and to probably do a lot of braggin' about himself. We runs into Scenery Sims, who has his eyes focused on the wine when it is red, and he ain't exactly what you'd call coherent.

"I—I ain't much," he tells us tearful-like.

We agrees with him, which don't help him none.

"I can't do nothin'," he tells us.

"——, that ain't news," agrees Dirty. "Everybody knows that."

"In the pay-jint," says he. "I want to be somethin'."

"All right," says I. "You be a hump in the road for the wagons to run over."

"That's all right f'r you two pelicans," says he. "You've got things to do. I've been shoved aside, that's what I've been done to, by gosh. Mebbe Piperock is progressin', but I'm right where I was a week ago. Have a drink?"

We would. In fact we had several. We got to a point where Dirty gets to braggin' about bein' East. He orates that he's also effete. Magpie comes back from Paradise, all swelled up over himself, and invades Buck's place.

"They'll come," he tells the world. "Paradise will be here in copious gobs. From Curlew we'll poll a big majority, and there'll be a sprinklin' from Yaller Horse. I prognosticate that Piperock will hold about all there is in Yaller Rock County. We has spread the gospel of progress, and the world responds."

"Has Paradise got her animals yet?" asks Buck.

"Not yet. Mike Pelly tells me that they're on the way. It's goin' to be nip and tuck between us towns. Well, I've got to go and see how things is goin'. Is Pete and Yuma workin' on that float?"

"All day," says Buck. "It'll be a dinger."

"Float?" says Dirty. "My ——, they're ignorant, Ike. There ain't water enough in this town to float a cork. We've done give our word to see that this here pe-rade is a howlin' success; but after it's over, me and you starts a pilgrimage. I sicken of the flesh-pots, jack-pots, et cettery. Long may she wave. Let's have another libation to old man Backus."

And that's the way she went. Bill Thatcher and his orchestra showed up a little later on—a bull-fiddle, a squeeze-organ and a jews-harp. Bill's boy, Ham, is the squeeze-organist, and old "Frenchy" Deschamps is doin' the moanin' on the harp.

"Kinda wanted t' know what kind of music Magpie wanted us to play," explains Bill. "We've got all kinds."

"You fellers graduated from 'Sweet Marie'?" asked Dirty.

"That's good music," says Bill kinda indignant-like. "If yuh don't like that, we can play it any old way you want it."

Some of Paradise comes that night, and among 'em is the gang from the Cross J. Chuck gets me aside and asks how we're comin' on the animal stealin'. I points out the difficulties, showin' him how close Piperock is guardin' their zoo.

"Get 'em durin' the parade," says Chuck. "Everybody will be interested in that, don'tcha see?"

"Can't be did," says I. "I'm part of the parade."

"What part are you, Ike?"

"I'm half of the east end," says I. "Now you know as much as I do."

"Who's guardin' 'em now, Ike?"

"I ain't sure, but I reckon Hassayampa is on duty."

Chuck goes away, leavin' me to nod at the bartender and lean against Dirty Shirt. Then cometh Polecat Perkins and his pack of high-class mongrels. He's got eight of 'em, all on ropes, and they proceeds to tangle themselves around our legs.

"Greetin's, everybody," says Polecat. "Lay down, dogs!"

Polecat joins our convention and gets enthusiastic over the fact that tomorrow is Labor Day and that we're goin' to have a jollification.

"Take them dogs outside," orders Buck. "My ——, this ain't no doggery, Pole Cat. Take 'em away so folks will have a chance to git to the bar."

Just about that time Hassayampa Harris comes into that saloon. I dunno how far he jumped from the outside, but I know he scraped his head on the top of the doorway and landed plumb in the middle of the room

"Yeeow-w-w-w! Look out!" he yelps.

Right behind Hassayampa comes Cleopatra. She comes among us, like a striped streak, hits in the middle of the room, lands on the pool table and goes plumb out through the back door, which has just been opened by Mighty Jones. Mighty's feet flip up where his hat had been, and over him goes Polecat's flock of dogs, each one tryin' to yell louder than the rest.

"That's our tiger!" explodes Buck.

"You—you can huh-have it!" pants Hassayampa.

"How did it get loose?"

"Go and ask it. I—I was talkin to Chuck Warner at the front door of the stable when all to once I hears somebody yell, and here comes Cleopatra."

"Somebody yell?" snorts Buck. "By golly, I'll bet some of that Paradise gang turned her loose while you was at the front door. Git down there, everybody, before they turn 'em all loose."

They all went down there, except me and Dirty and Buck. They could turn 'em loose as far as me and Dirty are concerned. A few minutes after they're gone Old Testament and Muley Bowles comes in. Testament ain't got no hat and his coat is split up the back. Muley don't track very well and he's got a swellin' over one eye.

"'In the midst of life we are in death,'" says Testament, indicatin' that he don't want his lemonade straight.

Buck looks 'em over.

"You two been fightin' each other?" he asks.

"It—it was a mistake," says Muley, drinkin' the water and pourin' his liquor in the cuspidor. "I thought Testament was a—a——"

"He thought I was a door," finished Testament, "and tried to go through me. Perhaps we had better go home, Muley."

"Yeah—and stay home," says Muley painful-like.

They went out just before the crowd came back. It seems that Gunga Din and Sahara are all right, but they left five guards in the stable.

"We found a hat," said Mighty. "Hassayampa said that they ain't fed that tiger for two days, and I'm kinda scared thatwe won't never find the man to put under that hat."

I'm goin' to draw a veil over the rest of that night. It will be sufficient to say that mornin' came apace, the sun came up in its usual way, and among us was brotherly love and the sweet spirit of progress. Civilization is sweet to the civilized.

Magpie found us the next day. He looks us over, tells us what he thinks of our ancestors, takes our guns away and leads us down to Wick Smith's home. I'm kinda hazy on just what happened to us, but it seems that me and Dirty went to sleep on a bed.



I DUNNO what time I woke up, but I suppose it was afternoon. I sets up on that bed and looks at the dangest person I ever seen. He was settin' there, lookin' at me. He's kind of a dirty, brown-complected *hombre*, with somethin' white wrapped around his head, and his body is covered with a striped gown of some kind.

I bats my eyes a couple of times, but he don't disappear.

"I'm dead and in ——," says the apparation.

It has the voice and eye of Dirty Shirt

Jones, but the rest of it don't look like him. Right then and there I marks an X after my name for a temperance vote.

"Yessir, I'm dead," says the person. "I've had delirium tremens enough times to know that this ain't it."

I looks across the room and sees another jigger of the same brand. Then I starts to get out of bed, intendin' to head for the door and this second dirty-faced thing moves right along with me. I've been lookin' in a mirror. Then I lifts one hand to my face, and it comes away the color of chocolate. There's a strong odor of turpentine in the place.

"What in —— has been happenin'?" I asks.

"Are you Ike Harper?" he asks, kinda awed-like.

"If that's a mirror, I ain't," says I. "Who are you?"

"I used to be Dirty Shirt Jones."

I starts to scratch my head and finds it all wrapped up in cloth.

"Did we get hurt, or somethin'?" I asks.

Before he can answer me, Wick Smith, Yuma Yates and Mighty Jones come in. They looks us over, and Wick Smith says—

"Thank gosh, they're sober enough to ride."

"Who done this to us?" asks Dirty. "I'll kill the man that painted me thisaway!"

"There was six of us done it," says Yuma. "It sure is one good job. By golly, nobody will know yuh, that's a cinch. Haw-haw-haw-haw!"

I got off that bed, intendin' to maul somebody; but Yuma pulled his gun and backed me onto the bed again.

"The worst is over, Ike," says he. "Be docile and gain great fame for yourself—you and Dirty."

"We better be goin'," opines Wick. "The crowd is anxious for us to get started. C'om, you East Injuns."

"East Injuns?" says I. "Is that what we look like?"

"Accordin' to the book," nods Yuma. "C'mon."

What could we do, I ask yuh? We went out with them, wearin' bandaged heads, house-paint and mother-hubbards. That paint is beginnin' to dry on my face, and the turpentine stings like a lot of bees. I opened my mouth and I can't get it shut.

"H'rah for ——!" wails Dirty. "Who's 'fraid of fire?"

We follers 'em up to the corner of Holt's hotel, and there we finds Gunga Din and Sahara, which are bein' held by Pete Gonyer, Olaf Hansen, Hassayampa Harris, Scenery Sims and "Half-Mile" Smith.

"Gunga Din is broke to ride," stated Hassayampa, "but I dunno about Sahara. Ike can ride the elephant, 'cause he's the biggest, and Dirty Shirt can mount the camel."

"Just a short moment," says I. "Nobody asked us. When I ride, I choose a horse; *sabe?* I ain't no elephant scratcher."

"Ain't yuh?" asks Yuma. "You swore to do what Miss Greenbaum asked yuh to, Ike. She asks yuh to ride the elephant."

"But what for?" I asks.

By golly, I ain't got no idea what it's all about. I can hear folks yellin' out in the street, and when they start to yellin' in Piperock, I don't wish to be there.

"Here's what yuh got to do," says Yuma. "You two ride down the street. About in front of Wick's store yuh will meet old Chief Cod Liver Oil and old Runnin' Dog. They'll have on their war-bonnets, et cettery, and they know what to do. They represent the old West; *sabe?*

"They give yuh the peace-sign, and it seems like yo're all talkin'. That's the part of it which is knowed as the West meetin' the East. Then comes Pete in an old covered wagon. That is the comin' of the white man. The Injuns act surprized. Behind his wagon comes Scenery Sims' autymobeel, which has been made into a fleat, and on it is the three figures, which represent Victory and the Progress of Piperock; *sabe?*

"Then that's about all, I reckon. I dunno what else there's to be done, Ike. Magpie explains that much to me. Thatcher's orchestra will be playin' all the time, I reckon. Anyway, it'll be good. Hassayampa, you and Half Mile help Ike up on Gunga Din."

"It'll be good all right," grunts Mighty. "Cod Liver Oil and Runnin' Dog done split a quart of lemon extract and a bottle of perfume between 'em."

I let 'em put me up on the back of that India-rubber ox, which ain't wearin' saddle nor bridle. Behind my animal is Dirty Shirt, settin' on the hump of Sahara, his face twisted kinda funny. He's got a pair of reins to hang on to.

Just then Gunga Din starts ahead. There

ain't nothin' I can do but set there and let things go. We went surgin' around the corner and into the main street. Yaller Rock County sure was there. Every hitch-rack is packed with horses, and between the racks and the middle of the street stands the population of a county, waitin' for us to show up.

They lets out a cheer when we showed up, and we ain't more than halfway to 'em, when up the street comes old Cod Liver Oil and Runnin' Dog, both of 'em decked out in war-paint, nose-paint, war-bonnets, and ridin' painted ponies.

I reckon it was a sight worth seein'. Honest to gosh, I sure did feel aboriginal. I was stoical, too. The only emotion I can show is with my right leg—the left one has gone to sleep. Then the East met the West.

We got within twenty feet of each other before them pinto horses got a good look at Gunga Din and Sahara. Cod Liver Oil's pinto just spread its legs, bawled like a calf—and fell down, sendin' the old buck into a somersault almost under Gunga Din. Runnin' Dog's pinto turns around on one hind leg, shuckin' old Runnin' Dog, and went past us like a streak.

Gunga Din reached down, wrapped his trunk around Cod Liver Oil, and stood the old boy on his head twenty feet away.

"Yee-ow-w-w!" yelps Liniment Lucas. "Some show!"

And into it all comes Pete Gonyer, drivin' a team of broncs hitched to a covered wagon. He is the Comin' of the White Man. He came—I'll say that much for him. The yellin' is too much for that team of broncs, and here comes Pete, feet braced against the front-gate of that wagon, haulin' short on the lines, while behind him billows that wagon-cover, like a anchored balloon.

Runnin' Dog has got to his feet, with the war-bonnet over one eye and blood in the other one.

"*Whoo!*" he screams. "*Hyas masahchie mokst la tel!*"

It was the first elephant he ever seen, and he called it a big evil with two heads.

There ain't no chance for me to move Gunga Din out of the path of them two broncs; so I sets supine and lets death rush down upon us. But it don't rush all the way.

About twenty feet away, them two broncs get their first look at the East, and they don't like it. They dig their heels into that hard street, set down in their harness, and out of that cloud of dust comes Pete Gonyer, all spread out like a flyin' squirrel, and he lands all spraddled out on the head of Gunga Din, still hangin' onto his lines.

As old Judge Steele might say—"Pandy-ammonium reigns."

The two broncs regains their equilibrium, ducks sideways and tries to go around us. They were goin' pretty good when they took up the slack on them lines, and Pete Gonyer lifted right off the dome of Gunga Din, sailed off through the air and butted Dirty Shirt plumb off his camel. He not only butted him off, but took him along.

Then Gunga Din lifted his trunk high in the air and bugles loud and free—

"Ra-a-a-a te ta-a-a-a ta ta-a-a-a!"



RIGHT then I want to get down. I don't reckon that any Harper ever lived that wanted to get down as badly as I do; but there ain't no safety on the ground. Every horse at them hitch-racks are heavin' and surgin, folks yelpin'. I want to yell, but that darned paint has set, with my mouth half open, and all I can do is say—

"Hoo, hoo, hoo!" like a darned owl.

Then cometh Victory—and Progress. Pete Gonyer has made a riggin' to fit over the top of Scenery Sims' automobile, kinda like a platform, and there's a railin' all around it, decorated with flags and colored cloth. The driver ain't in sight, and the danged thing looks like a runaway raft.

On the front of the arrangement stand Mrs. Wick Smith, all gauded up in cheese-cloth and a silver crown, which is settin' down over one ear, kinda rakish-like. One hand is grippin' the rail, while the other hangs to a big banner.

Behind her stands Mrs. Gonyer, dressed in white, tryin' to hold up one hand, like an Injun givin' a peace-sign, and hangin' onto her is Mrs. Mighty Jones, wearin' a night-gown and a pair of paper wings, one of which has climbed up on her shoulder, makin' her look like a broken-winged duck.

I seen all this in a lot less time than it takes to tell it. The thing is comin' too danged fast, I sabe that much, and I know that an automobile don't scare at elephants. A runaway horse goes past me, hits its rump against the platform of Victory and Progress and skids the thing aside.

Mrs. Smith goes down in a lump, and

Mrs. Gonyer lands on her knees, with that one hand still up in the air. Then Victory and Progress hits the East.

They knocked Gunga Din loose from the street, but they didn't remove him. I got Mrs. Smith in my arms, but Mrs. Mighty Jones went past me so fast that I didn't have no chance to make a collection. Then Gunga Din got his four feet on to the terry-firma agin' and started out.

He bowed his head, put it against that float and started for Buck's saloon front. I seen Magpie's head come up from among the wreckage and he starts hammerin' Gunga Din over the head with a piece of two-by-four, but he might as well 'a' kissed him, for all the good it done.

Wick Smith comes gallopin' alongside of us, yellin'—

"Leggo my wife! Leggo my wife! Dang you, Ike—leggo her!"

"Tell it to her!" I yelps back at him. "You —— fool, I ain't doin' the holdin'."

The rear wheels of that equipage hits the sidewalk, lifts up real sudden, and we begins to shove that whole works plumb through Buck's saloon front. It was then that I managed to get loose from another man's wife, and proceeds to fall backward off that elephant.

I dunno what in —— Sahara was doin' right behind Gunga Din, unless he was supposed to be there; but I do know that I lit kinda folded up across his long neck, and he starts to run with me. We went around in a circle three times before I fell off, and that —— camel walked all over me.

Then I sets up in that dusty street and tries to see what is goin' on. Horses are runnin' around like they was in a circus ring, and some of 'em are draggin' wagons and buggies behind 'em, which makes the street a dangerous place for to be. One wagon circled the street twice before I notices that Dirty Shirt is standin' up in the wagon, kinda balancin' himself, with his arms spread out wide.

Then the wagon hit the sidewalk and Dirty turned over twice before landed sittin' down on the sidewalk. I managed to limp and crawl over to him. His good eye is plumb closed, and the bad one won't keep still.

He's singin' soft and low, and kinda beatin' time with that jiggly eye. I has to listen real close, but above the roar of destruction I hears his singin'—

"Littul birdie in the tree, in the tree, in the tree;
Littul birdie in the tree-e-e-e-e, sing a song for me-e-e-e-e."

"There ain't no tree, Dirty," says I.

"Ain't there?" he asks soft-like. "There ort to be—there's so —— many birds."

Over around Buck's place there's folks yellin' to beat four of a kind, and some misguided jigger starts shootin'. I can see that there ain't no regular doorway left in Buck's saloon—just an openin' about ten feet wide.

Just about that time Gunga Din comes around the corner. He ain't got nobody on his back now, but he's got a chair hooked around one hind leg. He runs into the hitch-rack, tried to go under it, and lifts it plumb out of the ground. This kinda makes him sore; so he wraps his trunk around one of the posts and starts for us, packin' and draggin' it along with him, while on the far end of it is tied a piebald bronc from Paradise.

The most of the crowd stampeded for the Mint Hall, Wick's store and other places of safety, and it sure don't take long to clear the street of spectators. I sabe that Gunga Din is on a regular bust; so I picks Dirty Shirt up in my arms and staggers toward Buck's place.

I ain't in no shape to pack anybody, 'cause my right leg acts too short, which makes me circle a little to the right and I'm close to Gunga Din before I realize it.

There's just a *whap* and a *rip*, and outside of Dirty's headgear he's as naked as the day he was born. Gunga Din shucked him like an ear of corn. But Dirty don't know it, and I don't care; so we staggers on through the haze.

We fell into Buck's place, and it don't take a normal man to see that everythin' ain't right in there.

Old Testament Tilton is settin' up on what used to be the back-bar, squattin' there like a wise old owl, lookin' over the world; settin' there like a statue, sayin' nothin'. Piled up against the bar is what is left of the float. Buck is flat on his back, with his feet up over the pool-table, which has been moved over against the wall.

All to once that mass which used to be the float begins to heave upward, and from among the busted two-by-fours, twisted wires and colored cloth, cometh Sahara. How in —— that camel got mixed up in that float, I don't know, but there he is.

He comes out of there, plumb decorated,

and hanging' to his tail like grim death comes Magpie Simpkins, the president of Piperock's Chamber of Commerce.

Magpie has still got on one boot, a suit of red underwear and the crown of his hat, and in his eyes is a stern resolve. And behind him, pawin' out of the wreck, comes Wick Smith. They all gets clear of the wreck and Sahara stops. Wick has a two-foot piece of two-by-four in his hands, and he braces his feet far apart.

"Mum-Magpie," says he kinda thin-like. "You has made me a widder man, gol ding yuh."

But Magpie don't hear it. His mind is far behind that pageant of progress. He bows and kinda smiles, as he says:

"The wheel of progress is turnin', and wo unto him who gits under the tire. The people of Piperock has risen in their might, unleashed their bonds which has held them in darkness——"

Tunk! Wick Smith's two-by-four ended the speech.

"You didn't have to blame him entirely, Wick," says I.

He turns and looks at me, kinda weavin' on his feet.

"You?" he whispers. "You come bub-back? Where's my wife?"

"I dunno, Wick."

"You had her, dang you! I seen you huggin' her!"

I seen that piece of scantlin' comin', but didn't have flexibility enough to dodge. I distinctly heard it clank against my head, and then I finds myself out in the street again. I can hear a lot of dogs wailin', and I wonders if I can hear this because I've gone to the dogs. Ain't it funny what a feller will think about in a case like that?

A lot of folks are yellin' at somebody or somethin'; so I sets up and concentrates on the present. A bullet digs into the dirt beside me, but I don't mind. I kinda wonders why they're shootin' at me, of course. Then somethin' hooks me off the ground and begins to give me a ride.

I managed to get one eye open and finds that I'm on one end of that hitch-rack, and the motive power is furnished by Gunga Din. They've picked me up in the angle between one post and the top-pole, and the friction on that part of me which wasn't on the pole was somethin' awful.

Then Gunga Din let out another of them awful bugles, shucked the hitch-rack and headed for Buck's place again—and hangin' to the slack skin of Gunga Din's rear end was Cleopatra. Behind them came Polecat Perkins' pack of hounds, run to a frazzle, but still able to stagger on and wail plenty loud and long.

Them dogs has run that tiger all night, and it ain't no wonder that the tiger is huntin' for somethin' to climb on to. Right into the wreck of Buck's place they went, while the crowd, which is located in places of safety, yelled, shot and generally decided that —— was havin' a recess.



IT'S only about five minutes since East met West, but there has been several things come to pass. Gunga Din has gone back into Buck's place, tryin' to get rid of Cleopatra, when here comes Chief Cod Liver Oil, packin' an old Sharps rifle. The old war-whoop sure must 'a' been fortified against fear by much flavorin' extract, 'cause he heads straight for Buck's shattered entrance, soundin' his tribal war-whoop regular.

I got to my feet. I reckon they were my feet. There ain't no feelin' in 'em, but they hold me up; so they must be mine. An armless man could count all the Harper heroes on the fingers of his hands, but just the same I goes pawin' toward Buck's place to see what I can salvage from Gunga Din, Cleopatra and Cod Liver Oil.

I don't quite get there, when Cod Liver Oil comes out. He came out of there, end over end, missed me about a foot, and stood on his head and shoulders in the street. His Sharps lit just outside the doorway; so I picked it up and went in.

Cleopatra is settin' on what used to be the end of Buck's mahogany bar, her mouth wide open and her eyes shut. Gunga Din is standin' in the middle of the room, with one hind foot on Magpie's pant-leg, and Sahara is half-in and half-out of a rear window. And every time Gunga Din weaves the whole building shakes.

Dirty Shirt has got to his feet, and there he stands, plumb out of clothes, kinda rockin' on his feet and grinnin' foolish.

"Dud-do somethin'!" whispers Magpie. "Ain't nobody goin' to do somethin'?"

"Call on the Chamber of Commerce," says I.

From under a smashed card-table, Wick Smith shoves up his head. He's got the

brim of his hat in his teeth, but manages to work it loose with his tongue.

"I give up," he wheezes. "I know when I've got enough."

Old Testament is still settin' on the back-bar, but now he shakes loose and falls into Cleopatra. He kinda takes that big striped cat into a lovin' embrace, but Cleopatra yowled once, kicked Testament backward and jumped straight at me.

I throwed up that old Sharps, took a wing-shot at Cleopatra and then a great weight settled upon me. I ain't no fighter. None of my family ever won any diamond belts; but there never was a Harper that wouldn't fight to save his own life. And I sure went into a clinch with that tiger.

My eyes are too full of dust and pain for me to see just how the battle is comin'. We just kept on fightin', thassall. Once we got separated and it takes us quite a while to get together again, but we did. I can't see a danged thing and I don't reckon Cleopatra can either; so we locates each other by sense of smell.

I dunno how long we fought. Scientists would probably differ as to how long a man and a tiger can fight without one or both of 'em dyin'. I ain't got no feelin' left within' me. I reckon I'm kinda primitive just now, and I fights with tooth and claw. I hears voices around me, kinda cheerin'; so I puts up a supreme effort, as it were, and feels the tiger go limp.

"My ——!" I hears Dirty gasp hoarse-like, "They're still at it."

"I licked him—her," says I.

I ain't got more than enough breath to say that. And then I kinda passed out.

It seems like I heard somebody say:

"Let him alone, dang yuh! He done jist what I've wanted to see done for a long time."

It was probably quite a some time before I woke up again. For quite a while I can't figure out just where I am and what's goin' on. I seem to be layin' across somethin' that heaves and surges a heap. I manages to get one eye open and discovers that I'm on my stummick across a saddle.

Out in front of me and the horse is a queer-lookin' figure. It's got on a pair of overalls, which won't stay up, barefooted, bareheaded. It looks back at me, and I recognize Dirty Shirt by his jiggly eye.

Then I slides off and sets down beside the trail.

"Where we goin'?" I asks.

Dirty comes back and sits down beside me.

"It don't make no difference, does it?" he asks. "They said that we was mostly to blame; so I took you away from 'em and went away. It wasn't our fault, Ike; but they have to blame somebody."

"Magpie was mostly to blame," says I. "We done the best we could. I dunno what you done, Dirty, but I know I saved Piperock from a lot of heartaches."

"You sure did, Ike," says Dirty.

"That critter would 'a' been the ruination of Piperock."

"That's a cinch, Ike. But the worst of it is, you only stops the plague temp'-rarily."

"Thasso?" says I. "I done my best, Dirty Shirt. I wish I had the hide for a souvenir."

Dirty looks queer-like at me.

"I dunno," says he kinda sad-like. "A shock sometimes causes a feller to jerk back to his cannibal ancestors."

I dunno what he's talkin' about, but I'm too bunged up to care much, and my face is beginnin' to crack.

"How in —— did it finish?" I asks.

"All right, Ike. The animals all hived up in the livery-stable, and Wick Smith sold 'em to Paradise."

"The —— he did!" I exclaimed, or as much of an exclamation as I can use in my condition. "And didn't the Piperock Chamber of Commerce stop him?"

"There was only one to vote agin' it—and he was too danged near death to even squawk. They never even give him credit for tryin' to save the tiger. I seen it all, Ike. When you lifted that old Sharps to shoot Cleopatry, Magpie got loose from Gunga Din and fell into yuh."

"Uh-uh-huh," says I, feelin' weak. "And then what did I do to the tiger, Dirty."

"Nothin' a-tall. The wheels of progress got to turnin', and Magpie got under the tire, thasall. In the language of Magpie Simpkins, I wouldn't be surprized to see Piperock one of the big cities of the world."

"Well," says I, "in the language of Ike Harper, whose spirit, liver, lights and gizzard has been busted to make a Piperock holiday, let's get to —— out of here, before the place grows too big. I don't want to even be seen in the suburbs."

But she hasn't grown any since.

THE CHIEF PRAYS

by Larry O'Conner

LORD GOD, Thy will controls the winds, Thy hand can still the seas;
Thy love condones our mortal sins—forgie's our trespasses.
Think not I'd dare to interfere in plan of Thine, O Lord;
But Ye'll obsairve, we've with us here two hundred souls aboard.
Puir feckless loons wha dinna ken Thy mysteeries, O God—
They wadna' know a clincher-pin fra' yon connectin'-rod.
They've trusted to our seamanship, the skipper's skill and mine,
To see them safely through this trip across these seas of Thine.
Not e'en a sparrow falls to earth but what 'tis seen of Thee;
It isna' mine to judge their worth—these lives depend on me.
I rate my wark too high? Mayhap; yet, when all's said and done,
My job's to see yon heap o' scrap performs her scheduled run.
And should I fail to keep that trust, the blame comes back to me,
That leaves this helpless chunk o' rust the sport o' wind and sea.

Thou knowest, Lord, how we ha' wrought—we dinna seek for praise—
Whilst all Thine angry seas have sought to end our mortal days.
A surge, a broken pincher-pin, a bent eccentric-rod,
And over a' the fearfu' din that spells Thy wrath, O God.
To heat and shape that rod again, 'twas no small task, Ye mind,
Whilst tossed about like bowlin' pins, our eyes wi' sweat half blind.
And so, for fifty mortal hour, wi' hand, and brain, and nerve
We strove; and now we're under power; she knocks, but she will serve.
The end is aye within Thy hand, our skill is but a spark;
But still, a man, Ye understand, must strive to do his wark.
Not but the skipper's used his wits, above there on the deck,
Wi' every life-boat smashed to bits, the bridge a total wreck.
Seas swept the funnels from their stays, and breached the starboard rail;
Oh, aye; it's no child's play to face a North Atlantic gale.
The wheel-house went that second morn, wi' four hands, by the board.
They'd wives, na doot, their loss to mourn— Thy will be done, O Lord.

The crew's a scurvy pack o' thieves—dock rats, and gutter spawn;
But still, they're white; and times like these they curse, but carry on.
Not like these slant-eyed yellow men I've stokin' for me here;
Inclined to mutiny, Ye ken; and unco' swift to fear.

Ou, aye; they dinna cost so much but, hap things gang askew,
A crew wi' Anglo-Saxon guts are worth their extra screw.
Ye saw them try to quit her when that bilge-pump piston seized—
We'd little time to fritter then wi' treevialities.
Six inches on the floor at most, just sloshin' wi' the roll;
What's that, that men should quit their posts? They're here to shovel coal.
Our spanners taught them new desires, losh, man, they're awfu' swine!
Eh, well; they bided by their fires— We must ha' discipline.
Our sails, they lasted half an hour; cheap, smoke-burned, rotten, frail.
Our owners furnish us wi' power; why spend good cash for sail?

They owners! Lord, I wadna' sit to judge my fellow men,
But, an he be not short o' wit, a man must think, Ye ken.
They'll bide there safe ashore the whiles, wi' cars and Boards o' Trade,
And count, wi' smug and oily smiles, the profits they ha' made.
I wad we had them wi' us now; I'll warrant they'd ha' learned
Somewhat, ere sightin' land, of how those deevidends are earned.
Ye'll note the way those stay-bolts lift wi' every lurch and roll;
See how yon fish-plates girn and shift— They even skimp on coal,
And fill our bunkers up wi' rot that cakes the grates amain.
Tut, tut; I canna voice my thochts wi'out I'd grow profane.
They send us out wi'out repairs; cheap gear, and coolie crews;
They must not risk that gold of theirs; we've only lives to lose.
Insurance? Aye, for twice her cost. Why should they be annoyed
If common seamen's lives are lost? Look what she'd bring from Lloyd's.

Now, Lord, if Ye'll but stay Thy hand, sheathe Thy destroying sword—
Think not I'd wish to chaffer and to bargain wi' the Lord—
But these four days o' roll and rack; of race, and strain, and knock,
Ha' crippled us, and o'ertaxed this cranky, outworn box.
I dinna ask for summer sun, nor calm and peaceful days,
Here on this North Atlantic run, wi' winter under way;
But if, O Lord, it suits Thy will, abate this wind and sea,
And leave the issue to the skill Thou gavest unto me.
We come and go at Thy behest, nor reason why nor when;
A man may only do his best— Thy will be done. Amen.





Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.



IF ANY of you can throw further light on the following, it will certainly make interesting reading. Who was this white giant among the Western Indians a century or so ago? It's so wonderful a tale that if it were presented as a fiction story we'd hesitate to use so improbable a hero as this eight-footer. Yet the evidence Mr. Weaver brings forward points at least to a possibility in fact.

— Visalia, California.

Can any member of the Camp-Fire or any of the staff or corps of the magazine throw any light on the identity of a hunter or trapper of almost gigantic size who disappeared unaccountably, probably between 1800 and 1820, in the far West? His remarkable stature must have made him well known and of great repute among the early Mountain Men.

THE reason for asking is as follows: Nearly thirty years ago a small party of hunters were storm bound in an Indian camp in the lower Sierra Nevada, in California. A member of the party who could speak a few Indian words made a "hit" with a very old squaw, one of the oldest in appearance that any of the hunters ever saw, and she tried to give us a line on the history of past storms, other white hunters and some severe sickness. We could not make out if she was relating events in her childhood or during the childhood of her mother. The childhood part was plain enough, through her signs, but the word meaning "mother" was so frequently used and our knowledge of her language, as was her knowledge of ours, so slight that we could not be certain.

At any rate the gist of her relation was that a great many years before, while her tribe was living in another section of the same mountain range, another party of four white men, one of them of tremendous stature, had come to her camp in the midst of a storm. They were the first white men she or her

people had seen and they were made welcome. They stayed for some time and then, in some way, sickened and died, first one or two who were buried by their companions and then the last who were interred by the Indians in the same manner. Her talk made us understand that the mode of burial was strange to her people. Her effort to make us understand her was pretty successful notwithstanding the fact that we had no more than a dozen words in common and that she was too old and feeble to do much pantomime work. The uncommon size of one of the early white men, his death and burial and the long time elapsed since the coming of this party were plain. If the event occurred during her childhood it could not well have been later than 1825 or 1830, even allowing for the fact that the Indian women age early and look older than they are in many cases. If during the childhood of her mother, the date would run back possibly to near 1800. As early as that, or within a few years at least, I believe the Hudson's Bay Co. had men in touch with the Pacific coast.

NOW, many years after our party listened to the Indian's tale, one of the members was engaged in the construction of a road about twenty miles from the site of the Indian camp where we had taken shelter and a "cut" disclosed the grave or graves of four humans. A button or two was found, no other relics, but enough to prove the occupants of the graves to have been white—nor were they buried in the position the Indians give their dead—and among the bones were those of a giant. These, placed as well as possible by the finders showed one to have been near eight feet in height and with teeth, as one of the finders said, "nearly as big as a horse's." Exposure to the air caused the disintegration of the skeletons in a very short time and the whole were cast into another hole and left, without tear or marker, merely the last bed of an unknown adventurer and his pals.—MORVE L. WEAVER.



SOMETHING from Talbot Mundy in connection with his complete novel in this issue. His conception of Julius Cæsar has stirred up quite a lot of argument and we'll try to hear the pros and cons at Camp-Fire pretty much in full before we're through. Let's keep open-minded until we hear the evidence on both sides.

What appeals to me most about this period of history is that there is almost nothing definitely known about it. Of course, there are plenty of theories, but most of those are contradictory, although for the most part based on Julius Cæsar's Commentaries. But it can not be too often pointed out that Julius Cæsar was beaten in Britain—twice, in 56 and 55 B. C., and therefore that his account is tainted, to put it mildly, by deliberate and very skillful advocacy of his own case.

THERE is plenty of room for opinion, in view of the scarcity of known facts about the Britons. For instance, not even the most dogmatic and cocksure historians (of the type who wrote text-books when I was at school) pretended to know whence the Britons actually came. But it seems certain that those in the southeast of Britain had been there for at least three centuries at the time of Cæsar's invasion; that they possessed a rather cultured, almost ridiculously chivalrous, fair-haired ruling caste; did not build with stone, but were experts in metal work (such as bronze, gold and silver), marvelous horsemen; and were much given to rivalry. It is also *suggestive* that, after Cæsar's return to Rome, where he was thoroughly ridiculed for his failure against the Britons, British ornaments and even British chariots with basket-work sides and bronze wheels became the height of fashion—which is hardly likely to have been the case if the Britons were such "painted savages" as some historians have tried to make them out to be. Don't forget: they *defeated* Cæsar twice, when he was at the height of a series of successful campaigns; and so severely that he made no effort to return and conquer them.

THE coasts of Britain and Gaul were as close together as those of England and France today. In fine weather one coast can be seen from the other along a shore-line of a hundred miles or so from either side, and (again in fine weather) the craziest kind of cockleshell boat could cross the Channel without much danger. (I have myself sailed both coast-lines in a sloop not thirty-five feet long, and I know men who have done it in open boats.) So it seems to me ridiculous that Britain should be thought of as isolated from the known world (at the time of Cæsar's invasion or at any other time); and, in view of the fact that they had minted money, spoke a language almost identical with that of Northern Gaul, occasionally shared chiefs in common with the Gauls (as for instance the Atrebates) and possessed a highly developed Druidic philosophy with its accompanying social system, it seems highly probable that they were not barbarians at all.

FOR instance again, scores of roads in Britain have been attributed to the Romans, which on subsequent careful investigation show no trace of Roman origin, although the Romans may have repaired some of them and may have used others as a base for their own magnificent lines of communication. The Britons *did* make roads (and good ones) long before the Romans conquered them.

The Britons possessed tin, iron, gold, pearls, and traded in them, receiving in exchange, among other things, purple dye which must have come from the Mediterranean; so they were in contact with what is commonly regarded (although without too much proof) as the highest civilization of that period. They had a trading point at Vectis (probably the Isle of Wight) where the tin was assembled in ingots and shipped in foreign bottoms. There are references in the Old Testament (Isaiah) to the Isles of the Sea, and there is ground for supposing those Isles were Britain and Ireland; at any rate, the theory is next to impossible to disprove.

AS TO whether or not Lunden (London) existed as a town in Cæsar's day opinions are about equally divided. I have chosen to assume it did exist, as Caswallon's capital, for reasons that are too long to give here in full. But there is no doubt that the Thames existed and provided a safe, convenient anchorage for foreign ships. Ludgate Hill is Ludd's Gate Hill, and Ludd was a god of the Britons. The site of St. Paul's Cathedral must have been as

habitable and convenient then as now. And it is at least suggestive that important Christian churches are *very often*, if not nearly always, to be found on the sites of previous pagan temples or places of worship. Add to that admittedly hazy argument, two facts: that less than a hundred years ago some of the stakes were still in place in the bed of the Thames, placed there by Caswallon and his men to hold the ford near Lunden against Cæsar; *and* the *Nore* (the Thames estuary) lay wide open to the eastward, inviting commerce and invasion. It is hardly likely the Britons would *not* have built a town and fortified it at the one place where traders and sea-pirates could disembark in the very heart of their country.

AND that brings up the subject of the "Northmen" and their ships—a long and equally contentious one. The written records of the Northmen's long-ships do not commence until two or three hundred years later than the period of this story; and it seems to be assumed by some historians that the Northmen developed a type of ship and learned to navigate it, suddenly, at about the time when the Roman occupation of Britain was drawing to a close. But this is so contrary to all the teachings of history that I, for one, refuse to consider it seriously. Neither customs, architecture, ships nor geographical conditions are developed in a day, or in a hundred years. The clipper ship, for instance, was the outcome of a thousand years' experience, generation after generation of designers adding some refinement until at last the almost perfect "mistress of the seas" was launched from the ways of Maine and Massachusetts.

The remains of Viking ships discovered in Sweden and in England, though admittedly of a period somewhat later than this story, all show an exquisite "sweetness" of line and "sea quality" that could not possibly have been developed except by generations of experience. And there is no way of making that kind of experience except by navigating rough seas. Men do not navigate rough seas for amusement, as a rule, but under the impulse of necessity or for the sake of profit. And conditions in Norway, Sweden and Denmark must have been much the same (as to climate and geography) as today. In other words, the Northman's harvests used to fail and he fared forth in his beautifully constructed ships to seek holding elsewhere. Britain—the Humber, the Wash and the Mouth of the Thames—lay openly inviting, with nothing but the steep and dangerous North Sea passage between him and plunder. Which, again, brings us back to the Britons:

UNLESS they had been something vastly removed from savages, they would surely have been overwhelmed by the constant raids and invasions in force that, I believe, took place. Undoubtedly, as all historians admit, there was an appreciable percentage of Norse blood in the Britons on the East coast. I infer from that, that the Britons were able to "absorb" their prisoners and the occasional raiders who made good their footing; which is a sign, not of a barbarous people, but of a rather highly cultured one, that treated prisoners humanely, had no objection to intermarriage with them, and could offer something better to the invader than the social conditions he had left behind.

I take it, for instance, that if the American Indian had possessed, on the whole, a superior culture to that of the white man who invaded his country, he would have absorbed the white man instead of being overwhelmed by him. Britian even absorbed the Romans, who became "more British than the Britons" and prided themselves on it, in spite of their loyalty to the Rome that many of them never saw.

The British culture (whatever that was) profoundly influenced the Romans who came in contact with it—swallowed the Saxons, Angles and Jutes later on, who in turn absorbed the Normans. Each host of invaders overran the country, imposing new conditions and new customs; but the climate, and something else (perhaps the pagan culture of the Druids) persisted—doubtless with changed names and obliterated details—through it all. So I don't feel guilty of anachronism when I show Caswallon as a gentleman, not altogether unlike one of those modern English squires—a little stupid, a little "insular," but a perfect sportsman—who led his men to death against the Germans on the Marne.—TALBOT MUNDY.



ONE of our comrades starts a snake argument with Curator Ditmars of the Bronx Zoo and offers to back it up. He had something to say about Prohibition but, having given both sides a hearing at Camp-Fire, I think we'd better lay off that subject at least for a while. No, no, don't get suspicious—at least nine-tenths of you who've written in on that topic have been on the same side of the fence as I.

Philadelphia.

I'm off. For years I've been listening to the steady crackle of arguments pro and con—hoop snakes, milk snakes, anti-pistol laws, prohibition, etc. Now listen to me.

SINCE I was six years old I've played with snakes, since about fourteen I've studied their habits; am now twenty-nine.

When I start to figure it out I even surprize myself with the fact I've *handled* thousands of reptiles which I caught bare-handed, or with the aid of a stick. I never killed a reptile of any kind excepting the common water snakes, which, in my estimation, are deserving of death as they feed almost exclusively on fish.

Granted that Ditmars knows his stuff—so do I. And if I feel like disagreeing with him, grant me the right.

Eugene Cunningham gives Ditmars credit for the statement, "We (New York Zoo) have never induced snakes to take an interest in milk."

Have available a baby boa that drinks milk as readily as water and seems fond of it, though much preferring live mice. Have fed milk to milk snakes, black snakes, pine snakes, corn snakes. After witnessing dozens of them drink it, I offer to prove, given sufficient time to get specimens, by demonstration that these snakes will drink milk.

HAVE two eye-witnesses to what I believe was a thoroughly effective demonstration of a black snake charming (hypnotizing, mesmerizing, or whatever you choose to call it) a bird into helplessness and then swallowing said bird.

Ditmars claims fright renders the bird helpless, or makes it appear helpless. This can't be true; you don't have to be a naturalist to know that a frightened bird flies away from whatever frightens it.

When it comes to snakes milking the cows, however, chalk me up along with the rest of the authorities in saying it isn't done. Nor are there any hoop snakes. A blue racer or whip snake sometimes gets going down grade so fast he flops tail-end first and turns a clumsy somersault, but he never rolls in a hoop. If he tried such a stunt he'd dislocate every bone in his spinal column. Mr. Snake can only bend sideways with comfort.

AS TO the poisonous snakes, especially the copperhead, of which I now speak with painful intimacy: when they bite, you know it with sad and immediate certainty. One copperhead, about 18 inches long, with half second's injection in my wrist, gave the sensation of a red-hot poker being thrust against the wrist, then pressed all the way up my arm to the shoulder. You can't fix a ligature with one hand. If you're bit on the hand or forearm there's only one thing to do—open the punctures made by the fangs real wide to let the blood flow and suck it out as fast as it'll come. This has to be done quick to draw the poison out the way it went in. But you won't do it quick enough to stop the intense pain no matter how ready you are to act, I know.

The swelling of the arm was terrifyingly fast, and prolonged. It took about twenty-four hours for the arm to shrink to anything like normal, somewhat longer for the discoloration to disappear. Body and head were hot, painful and feverish. Terribly thirsty. Believe that several gallons of water every few hours helps wash the poison out of the system, however. But to realize the terrific effects of snake venom, read the Dept. of Agriculture's pamphlet on their findings in this respect.

SO THERE remains with us a large number of serious (?) thinking people who, because they see the effect, think they know the cause of crime! They do insist that by taking from us the only weapon we have with which we can combat the murderer and thug on equal terms we'll be setting the criminal such a good example he'll reform. Applesauce!

I DETEST spiders. I once had a double handful of puff adders, horn toads and lizards, as well as several pocketfuls of turtles, when I kicked what looked like a fuzzy rock. The fuzzy rock (about as big as my fist) spread out into a reddish brown spider the size of a plate—and slammed itself, plop, against my leather-legging encased leg. I kicked so hard the leather legging slipped down over my shoe, the strap broke, and it flew off, the legging that is—for the spider scampered away so quick it never knew my leg had moved.

I saw a number of these spiders near El Paso. Often wondered if they were poisonous. Don't think they were tarantulas for I've looked over some caged specimens of the latter since then. They were plenty big, though.

ANY one that cares for any "dope" on the reptiles of Eastern-Central States can sound me out. Don't recall their Latin names off-hand, always have to look this up, but the snake doesn't crawl nor the turtle waddle hereabouts that I don't know something about its habits.

For instance: the striped water snake eats *nothing else* but crayfish. The long, slender (Irish) green snake likes nothing so well as the hairless caterpillars or worms that make lace-work of cabbage and lettuce leaves. Wonder what the farmer would say if he found the snake's belly full of mice or the bugs he spends so much time and money exterminating after he thoughtlessly killed it?—One of the Embers, V. A. GRILLET.



SHORTLY after he had been made our "Ask Adventure" authority for France one of our comrades passed into the beyond. Norman S. Goodsill, of San Diego, California, died February 15 after an illness of only a few hours. Though I had never met him, he was one of our readers with whom I had become friends through correspondence and I had come to admire him not only for his personal qualities but for his stanch, clear-sighted Americanism.

I know that Camp-Fire will rise to its feet to wish him good faring over the Long Trail.



BECAUSE it brings up a subject we haven't heard discussed at Camp-Fire—and that it might be just as well to have a look at, I'm passing the following letter on to you even though the writer asked not to have his name used with it. Also, as some others may have queried John Webb's statement about rations during the war, it gives Mr. Webb a chance to back up his words.

In general, however, the line will be drawn more strictly than ever against printing any letters without printing their writers' signatures. There are, heaven knows, plenty of good letters for Camp-Fire without using unsigned ones.

Havana, Cuba.

Your story in Camp-Fire for February 28th about Mr. Stemmler and his present day work in a revival of archery gets to me; when I was a boy on the farm in Tennessee I now own there my father put bows into our hands and I've always had a wish to do some thing with it if opportunity ever offered. Now that I'm in the tropics in business calling for some office work, I need exercise and I despise golf, heretical though that may be; there doesn't seem to be quite enough practical use about it; so I want to write Mr. Stemmler if I may have his address.

YOU may be interested to know what I'm trying, in connection with some New York money. I'm trying to establish the feasibility of a modern system of milk supply in the tropics. If these people (especially children) would drink more milk and

eat less meat, they would be better nourished and less susceptible to disease.

I've been pioneering in a business way all my life and had promised myself to stop, but the urge to try out something new is hard to overcome.

ANENT the letter of John Webb in the same issue. I want to come to the defense of my branch of the U. S. Army service in the war. This was the Nutrition Corps attached to the Medical Corps. It consisted of all the nutrition and food experts they could get together (not a great many, for knowledge of this subject was then even less widely disseminated than now) though owing to the fixed character of the military mind, this corps had no chance to show what it could really do to keep the grub for the boys good and plentiful. It did vastly more for them than had ever been done before in a war, and not only insisted on a well-balanced and well-cooked ration, but kept a vast amount of bad food out of their victuals. Witness that there was no "embalmed beef" scandal in this war and that one "gold fish" contract was knocked endways by this service and, as I now recall, practically all of the stuff kept out of circulation. Our boys really suffered from hunger on the French and British rations, which were different and much less ample and not balanced.

This may have been the reason Mr. Webb (a sailor by the way and so with no first hand knowledge of Army rations) was so besieged in overseas ports by hungry soldiers and he ought not to write so "keerless like" without exact knowledge; criticism without knowledge is easy—and abundant.

If you should see fit to publish any part of this letter (I don't see why you should) don't use my name. Its purpose is chiefly to get Stemmler's address, for which I can't send you return postage, obviously. But also I want to call down loose writing and incidentally to call attention to a scientific achievement quite as important in its way as anything with gas or H. E.—and a darned sight more useful to us in ordinary times—and of which few people seem to know.—C. B. A., Late Captain Sanitary Corps. U. S. A.

ANSWER by John Webb of our writers' brigade:

Long Branch, New Jersey.

At different times during the war, I was in France about six months all together. I was in Brest, St. Nazaire, Bordeaux, Paris and Marseilles (twice). I talked to a great many soldiers, and listened attentively to what they had to tell me. Some of these soldiers were stupid, some were intelligent; some were obvious liars and scoundrels, many were just as obviously honorable and decent; most of them were entirely sober, but some were very drunk and others were on the border line; amongst the men I listened to were yeggs and gunmen, factory workers, laborers, mechanics, business and professional men, heads of large companies, college graduates and men who had never seen the inside of a schoolroom.

NOW, as I said, some of these men were doubtless careless with the truth, but I do not think they *all* were; if Mr. C. B. A. is right, and the soldiers' food was as good as he says it was, then all these men, in all conditions and from all walks of life, in half a dozen French cities and from many outfits, must have entered into a giant conspiracy, and rehearsed before hand, all for the purpose of misleading me.

Then there were the soldiers who used to trail me around in port, scores of them, begging me to allow them to eat aboard ship. What about them? Why did they tell me they were hungry, that the food given them by their outfits wasn't fit to eat? I don't believe those men were liars; they were too honestly thankful when I gave them places at the mess-table in the forecastle. And they nearly always left the ship with the same remark—"You'll have to come over and eat with us sometime, boatswain." This was merely out of politeness; it was not really an invitation. They always added, "That is, if you aren't hungry, and don't care much what you eat. You needn't expect to get anything like you get aboard *here*." And the food aboard that ship was terrible! Forecastle food is notoriously poor, but our food was far below the average, and the kind of food I'd not give to a dog that I thought anything of—or to any dog, in fact. It gives me a weak feeling in my stomach to think of the dishes handed out to us aboard that ship; yet the soldiers agreed that our food was vastly superior to their own, and came back for more as often as I let them, which was as often as I could. I wish I knew the number of American soldiers who ate aboard the *S.S. Roepat* while she was in St. Nazaire and other ports in France.

THEN there was the firm I knew of that made a business of buying up condemned foodstuffs, particularly jam and preserves, and reboiling it to be sold to the army buyers. They bought thousands of cans, each can with its ends bulged out so that it looked like a football. I know a young fellow who worked for the company, and he told me that the stench from the cans, when opened, would knock a mule down.

But Mr. C.B.A. says these things could not have happened. Well, perhaps not. I thought I saw them, and I'm confident that most of the men I listened to thought they were telling the truth, but perhaps the things they and I thought we saw were visions. I notice a peculiar thing in the statistics of the war, though: approximately twice as many died from "disease" as were killed in action. In round numbers, 63,000 is the number listed under the heading "Disease." Many causes contributed, of course; but remember that the victims were nearly all young men, the pick of the country's manhood, and had all been physically examined and pronounced in good health. I'd bet there were some among them who did not die from an over-indulgence in good food. The food we had aboard ship was unfit for a dog, as I said, and if the army food was worse—I leave the conclusion to you.

Mr. C.B.A. doesn't say whether or not he was in France during the war; is his knowledge "first-hand," or is it hearsay? It seems to me that he tells the story himself—". . . . this corps had no chance to show what it could really do to keep the grub for the boys good and plentiful." How, then, did it accomplish so much, if it had *no chance* to accomplish anything? I don't get that.

Well, enough's enough. Sometime I'm going to tell you what I really think of that war, but for the present I'll content myself with that A.S.H. query— "And we call ourselves civilized?"—JOHN WEBB.



FROM comrade Jay Lewis of Norfolk, Virginia, comes a page out of the *Literary Digest* of February 21 with an exclamation point over their changing the title of Bill Adams' book from "Fenceless Meadows" to "Senseless Meadows":

CROWDING CONRAD

Conrad was no sooner safe upon his pedestal than men began to burrow about the base. Already two rivals, if not superiors, have been found, one here and one in England. Our own candidate for Conrad's fame is Bill Adams, an ex-sailor, now home from the sea and settled in California. His last spring's book, "Senseless Meadows," is mentioned in Charles Baldwin's new critical volume, "The Men Who Make Our Novels," as a true rival of Conrad's best sea stories: and Mr. Baldwin has Samuel Hopkins Adams (no relation to Bill) to back him up. In England Mr. Clement Shorter hails the English writer, Mr. H. M. Tomlinson.

"Fenceless Meadows," as you know, appeared first in our pages and, as Mr. Lewis says in an accompanying letter:

And to think *Adventure* discovered Bill Adams and *Adventure* readers have been enjoying his stuff long before the Literary Lights spotted him! Same goes for Sabatini. Some day they'll discover Hugh Pendexter.

It is good that Bill Adams is beginning to be accorded the place that is his due. If a certain story be true, this his first book met with bad fortune. The report is to the effect that certain of the New York professional critics were much impressed by the literary quality of his work but, not being sailors, turned for expert judgment on his knowledge of the sea to one or two ex-followers of the sea with literary accomplishments or pretensions of their own. That judgment, solemnly delivered, was that Bill Adams did *not* know the sea and that his stories were *not* sound and reliable from the point of view of nautical technicalities! So the alarmed critics hastened to hedge on intended endorsements of "Fenceless Meadows," handled it very warily or not at all, and all the sheep critics and sheep readers who follow along after them of course did the same.

It is both laughable and pathetic. And rather disgusting. I wonder how many of you who are sailors and know the sea have written in, first and last, about Bill Adams' sea stories. If I am wrong, correct me, but did any single one of you ever say that Bill Adams does not know the sea? Does any one of you think he doesn't? I know well enough that a small army of deep water men who gather at our Camp-Fire have stated very emphatically that he does know the sea.

If I ever knew, I have forgotten—and am glad of it—the names of these nautical gentlemen—no, men—no, persons who, safely behind the scenes and established in the confidence of the confiding critics, thus carefully and coldly prevented another seaman from winning literary laurels coveted by themselves. One's sympathy goes to the critics who were gulled and betrayed by them but along with the sympathy has to go a grin that these exceedingly sophisticated gentlemen could be so naive as to trust the verdict of such obviously interested parties. As for the parties themselves—bah!

Here's to Bill Adams! May he come into his own.



SOUTH AFRICA being quite some little distance away, William Westrup's letter didn't reach us in time to appear in the issue containing his first story in our magazine, but here it is along with his second. He did his best to follow Camp-Fire custom to the letter as well as in spirit and Camp-Fire doesn't ask anything more than that.

Born in England, much longer ago than I care to think about. In the early eighties, to be precise. Educated there, and while still in my teens came to South Africa with the rather nebulous idea of being secretary on an out-district mine of which the chairman was a family friend. But when I reached Natal, the Boer War, which should have been over, was still in full blast, and the alleged mine was quite inaccessible. As soon as I could burst my contract I did so, and joined the Natal Mounted Rifles, but too late for any fighting.

THEREAFTER, having a healthy appetite and no means, I did many things. Checked cargo at the Durban docks, tried my hand as a brewery clerk, became accountant for a firm of shipping agents. The last was rather star-spangled, as at the time I knew nothing about accountancy and had to rely on a pathetic smile and a large amount of bluff. About this time things brisked up, and finding myself in possession of some real money, I wandered forth to see South Africa. Tried, in a not very serious manner, farming, gold mining, digging for alluvial diamonds, native trading, and sundry other lines. All the time I was storing up material which later came in very useful, for the itch to write is a family failing. Adventures? None really startling. One rather unique for this sunny country in that myself and a friend were lost in the snow on the Drakensberg Mountains for three days. It is not

often the snow there amounts to anything, but on this occasion it made up for other missed opportunities. However, we got out none the worse, though rather hungry. Also had the usual snake adventures, none of which ended fatally—for me.

STARTED writing about a dozen years ago, to help a friend who owned a rather dud paper. I wrote humorous articles for him and they nearly killed the paper altogether. However, a Johannesburg editor happened to see one in an exchange, and thought highly of it. So that was the beginning. Have had six novels published in England, two of which did well, and the others so-so. One has been filmed. The late war drove out any inclination to write, but I began again some two years ago.

For the rest, like many struggling authors, I do other work. Indeed, I am no longer a rover, but most domesticated and sedentary. Getting stout. But though I occupy a niche in a big financial corporation in Johannesburg, I always cherish the conviction that one day a book of mine will boom and then heigho! for the life of the veld, with the campfire at night, and the good buck stew, and the yarns, and the mosquitoes and scorpions and snakes! Still, it is so difficult to remember the snakes and scorpions, but the smell of the wood fire. . . . —WILLIAM WESTRUP.



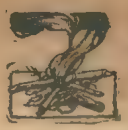
A CONTRIBUTION to our discussion on the early days of tobacco, from William Ashley Anderson of our writers' brigade and formerly of our editorial staff. He holds that it may have originated in Asia instead of in America.

Montauk, Long Island, New York.

I notice in Camp-Fire a discussion about the introduction of tobacco to the Cossacks both *via* Constantinople and *via* Archangel. May I add to the discord that in my opinion the Tatars may very well have brought tobacco from the Far East?

TOBACCO has every evidence of having been indigenous in China; and there is just as much likelihood that tobacco came to America from China as there is that it went to China from America. It is an ethnological commonplace to note the resemblances between characteristics of Mongols and Manchus and the Indians of America. To one who has seen both in their natural settings their cousinhood is perfectly obvious.

As well as I can remember, the native name for tobacco in Manchu is tambaku. When I was with the British-American Tobacco Company in China, in 1911, the leaf experts exploring the country found tobacco being grown under conditions that astounded them, far in the remote interior. The leaf grew to great size in irrigated fields, sometimes flooded; and snow did not seem to make any difference to the stacks that were piled for curing. This tobacco was extremely coarse, and had every indication of being of native origin. I offer this as an opinion, but I have always believed it can be substantiated that tobacco cultivation had its origin in China no less than America. The flora of both countries is strikingly similar, you know.—W. A. ANDERSON.



AT A former Camp-Fire a newspaper article, sent in by a comrade, told of the death of Fred Hans and gave an account of his life. A comrade now riddles the statements made in that article. No, comrade Blake, I won't refer you to the Government records, etc. Camp-Fire didn't vouch for any of that article. It was merely presented, as everything else is presented at Camp-Fire, to meet the Camp-Fire test and, if it deserved it, to be pulled to pieces just as you are doing. Go to it.

Brooklyn, New York.

A couple of friends, old-timers, originally from the cow country, were visiting me today, and among others the article in reference to the death and accomplishments of one Fred Hans, known as the "Lone Star," came up. We all read Camp-Fire. You can push in all your chips and what personal calamity you possess that *if* somebody don't take notice of said eulogy and reply to what we read—one of us will. I wish Cody, Hickok, Dr. Carver, Cal. Joe, Pawnee Bill, Texas Jack, Bat Masterson and a host more were all alive—together—and I could be where I could watch *them* when this epistolory effusion from one of his admirers was read.

"USED both guns hammer fanning." I've a hundred bucks says he never made a bull's-eye without using the trigger (unless by accident and such don't obtain West).

So far as his being the "official War Department investigator of the Custer Massacre," following Sitting Bull's 600 miles on horseback and inducing him to *return to the reservation* and was present at Sitting Bull's death is concerned, we two of us know something regarding it and, while personally I don't dispute it all, will call to your mind what *really* happened. You can form your own opinion.

The Custer racket was in 1876; the date was the 25th of June. (And let me say in parenthesis Sitting Bull wasn't in it; Gall and Crazy Hoss ran that show and, what is more, had Crook followed out orders instead of retreating—eating his own horses—afraid to kill game—had Cook come *up* Custer might and probably would have lived.) To go back, the scrap was in 1876. Sitting Bull hunted during the summer and the troops hunted him. That was all round the Yellowstone. Colonel (later General) Miles was after him and had 400 soldiers. They overtook Bull finally up at Cedar Creek, but not to pinch him. Bull did not give up. He went to Canada and not until 1881 did he return to Fort Buford (N. D.) of hunger voluntarily. He was at first pinched and then the Government got shut of him by giving him to Cody as an attraction in the "Wild West" show.

This great F. Hans may have been in at the death of Bull. If so it's the first I ever knew of it or of any white man being there.

ONCE more listen to the facts. Major McLaughlin (agent at Standing Rock) sent 40 Injun police up to Bull's house. They were followed at a distance by some troops. These police were all

Injuns. They went up in the dark and in the racket trying to arrest him in the morning. Bull's brother killed one of the police, Lt. Bull Head—about a dozen were killed, six or so on each side and after it was all over the brave troops (held back in case of trouble) came up and plugged the camp with Hotchkiss guns. This was in 1890.

Will you refer me to the account in the Government records where this great Hans shows action?—HERBERT CODY BLAKE.

That comrade Blake himself fully realizes Camp-Fire's methods of bringing out the real facts by general discussion is evidenced from a later letter—in which he has a shot at too expert gun men:

Brooklyn, New York.

By this forum, this free-for-all, the real true history of much which has long since happened is for the first time being printed in *Adventure*. Take for example the controversy Hough *vs.* Henry.

Now when it's all thrashed out and we've all put up our bluff *re* Custer, I'm gambling that out of what is told in *Adventure* may be read the *first* and only complete *true* account of the affair. Personally I've much interest in anything referring to Custer as my mother lost a brother in the scrap.

I hardly think anything I wrote you is worth printing. I'm an old cow-punch who, although house broke enough to know not to put hoss-radish on ice-cream, can't write good composition enough for magazines. If you think different and consider what I wrote calculated to start some sport to giving us some information, go ahead.

IT MAY or may not interest you to know I wrote (and have long reply from) the best and highest authorities in United States on gun fanning with a Colt (back in those days) and absolutely it is only by accident; only by such that absolute centers or marks are hit at any such distance as we read of. Of course, none of us old blokes read or pay any attention to these cusses who get their beans by writing stories of two-gun sports who file the sights off and pull out the trigger holding up the hammer with their thumb. They might hit a man across a table or a hoss five feet away and that's all. What's more: This chucking a tomato-can or two into the air and keeping it up there by hitting it six or twelve times with a Colt or throwing up six poker chips and hiving one after the other "and each fell in fragments" (usually in about the third chapter) is all —— rot as is this getting "creased in the shoulder" so often.

To go back to Custer—for I am going to let the "gun men" fight out the first mentioned wonderful thing this old sport is said to have done. I had several talks with two Sioux bucks (old ones, of course) and with a blanket squaw who went through a Mission School, last Summer. The Injuns were with Gall (who was the top boss in the fight), the squaw did the "interpreting" for us when necessary and little by little I am getting the real dope concerning the Massacre and if the outcome of all this controversy over Custer results in *Adventure* putting before the public the whole story, I say it will alone be more than worth all we pay for it.—HERBERT CODY BLAKE.



THIS 1921 letter from our cache ought to have been printed long ago. But you know how it is—to handle all our Camp-Fire letters with system would demand far more time than the eleven of us in the office could possibly get hold of.

Probably few of you realize the immense amount of office work necessary to handle all the details of our various departments. If *Adventure* printed fiction only we could probably cut our staff in half and carry the work easily. "Camp-Fire," for example, is my own personal job. I like "Camp-Fire" as much as any of you, but I certainly don't like the work it involves. It looks easy to fill a few pages mostly with what some one else writes, but I think I never in my life did anything else that took so much time in proportion to results shown. An iron-clad, fully detailed system would save some of that time, but none of us has time to operate the system.

So we must just be content with our cache into which all Camp-Fire letters go and from which we draw pretty much at random.

Pardeeville, Wisconsin.

Will some one tell me who wrote "In the Days of the Meeting"? It relates to the Sepoy uprising. Rujub the juggler with his daughter are saved from a tiger by Bathurst who drives it off with a whip. I read this a long time ago and would like to get it again.—DR. A. L. WOOD.



DON'T forget that we still have on hand a number of indexes by volume for *Adventure* which we shall be glad to send to you in return for the necessary postage. Postage costs about one cent per index.

SERVICES TO OUR READERS



Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the second and third issues of each month. Full list in second issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.



A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts

QUESTIONS should be sent not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

1. The Sea Part 1 American Waters
BERIAH BROWN, 1624 Biegelow Ave., Olympia, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (*See next section.*)

2. The Sea Part 2 British Waters
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Seamanship, navigation, old-time sailorizing, ocean-cruising, etc. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

3. The Sea Part 3 Statistics of American Shipping
HARRY E. RIESEBERG, Apartment 347-A, Kew Gardens, Washington, D. C. Historical records, tonnages, names and former names, dimensions, services, power, class, rig, builders, present and past ownerships, signals, etc., of all vessels of the American Merchant Marine and Government vessels in existence over five gross tons in the United States, Panama and the Philippines, and the furnishing of information and records of vessels under American registry as far back as 1760.

4. Islands and Coasts Part 1 Islands of Indian and Atlantic Oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*See next section.*)

5. Islands Part 2 Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Languages, mining, minerals, fishing, sugar, fruit and tobacco production.

6. Islands Part 3 Cuba
WALLACE MONTGOMERY, Warner Sugar Co. of Cuba, Miranda, Oriente, Cuba. Geography, industries, people, customs, hunting, fishing, history and government.

7. ★ New Zealand; and the South Sea Islands Part 1 Cook Islands, Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Travel, history, customs; adventure, exploring, sport. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

8. ★ South Sea Islands Part 2 French Oceania (Tahiti, the Society, Paumoto, Marquesas); Islands of Western Pacific (Solomons, New Hebrides, Fiji, Tonga); of Central Pacific (Guam, Ladrone, Pelew, Caroline, Marshall, Gilbert, Ellice); of the Detached (Wallis, Penrhyn, Danger, Easter, Rotuma, Futuna, Pitcairn).
CHARLES BROWN, JR., Boite No. 167, Papeete, Tahiti, Society Islands, South Pacific Ocean. Inhabitants, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

9. ★ Australia and Tasmania
PHILLIP NORMAN, 842 Military Road, Mosman, Sydney, N. S. W., Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

10. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
FAY-COOPER COLE, Ph. D., Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions.

11. ★ New Guinea
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HOWARD R. VOIGHT, 35 Dawson Ave., West Haven, Conn. Fishing, hunting, travel, roads; business conditions, history.

72. Eastern U. S. Part 9 New Jersey
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73. Eastern U. S. Part 10 Maryland
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G.—Tropical Forestry

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care *Adventure*. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.

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LIEUT.-COL. W. G. SCHAUFFLER, JR., 2940 Newark St., N. W., Washington, D. C. Airplanes; airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

L.—Army Matters, United States and Foreign

FRED. F. FLEISCHER, care *Adventure*. *United States:* Military history, military policy. National Defense Act of 1920. Regulations and matters in general for organized reserves. Army and uniform regulations, infantry drill regulations, field service regulations. Tables of organization. Citizens' military training camps. *Foreign:* Strength and distribution of foreign armies before the war. Uniforms. Strength of foreign armies up to date. History of armies of countries covered by Mr. Fleischer in general "Ask Adventure" section. *General:* Tactical questions on the late war. Detailed information on all operations during the late war from the viewpoint of the German high command. Questions regarding enlisted personnel and officers, except such as are published in Officers' Directory, can not be answered.

J.—Navy Matters

LIEUT. FRANCIS V. GREENE, U. S. N. R., 588 Bergen Street, Brooklyn, N. Y. Regulations, history, customs, drill, gunnery; tactical and strategic questions, ships, propulsion, construction, classification; general information. Questions regarding the enlisted personnel and officers such as contained in the Register of Officers can not be answered.

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P.—Entomology

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Q.—STANDING INFORMATION

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For general information on **U. S. and its possessions**, write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For **U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries**, the Dept., of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the **Philippines, Porto Rico,** and customs receiverships in **Santo Domingo** and **Haiti, the Bureau of Insular Affairs**, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For **Alaska**, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For **Hawaii**, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For **Cuba**, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The **Pan-American Union** for general information on **Latin-American matters** or for specific data. Address L. S. ROWE, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For **R. C. M. P.**, Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For **Canal Zone**, the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C.

National Rifle Association of America, Brig. Gen. Fred H. Phillips, Jr., Sec'y, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C.

United States Revolver Ass'n. W. A. MORRALL, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National Parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address National Park Service, Wash., D. C.

For whereabouts of **Navy men**, Bureau of Navigation, Navy Department, Wash., D. C.

Reminiscences of East Africa

VARIED life in Portugal's leading colony:

Corunna, Ont.

OF THE various sections of the vast continent of Africa under European rule, perhaps one of the many known to us in little more than name is Portuguese East Africa, in which country the writer lived for two years at an isolated outpost on the borders of the districts of Zambesi and Mozambique, the latter being one of the two remaining provinces or districts that were still under military jurisdiction at the time of his stay. The other district is that of Nyassaland, and in these territories hostile tribes are still to be met with, and their pacification is not always accomplished without bloodshed.

My entry into the country was at Delagoa Bay or as it is better known out there, Lourenço Marques. On my arrival at Lourenço Marques I left the *Durham Castle* to reembark on the *Zambezia* of the Empress Nacional de Navavagacao for the continuation of my voyage up the coast.

Our first port of call was at Inhambane, a small place situated some miles up the Limpopo River. On every side there was evidence of a rich, fertile country as was shown by the coconut plantations fringing both sides of the river. Tobacco of a very high grade is also successfully grown and manufactured in this district.

On arrival opposite the village we dropped anchor in midstream, and it was here that I learned that at all our ports of call on the voyage, we were unable to approach the shore any nearer than half a mile. The freight and mails were unloaded in a small lighter, after which we again headed out to sea for Beira. A full day and a half were spent here. In this town—known on the coast as "Tin Town" on account of its galvanized-iron buildings—everything is as near up-to-date as possible, electric light and a railway terminal included.

The streets are filled with sand of a very loose nature, and foot travel is anything but pleasant. The merchants, however, overcome this by going to and from their places of business in trolley push-cars. They remind one of the hand cars used by section gangs in our own country, with the addition of a canopy top and seat, and of smaller gage. Switches are provided, so that cars can pass each other. On arrival at their destination they are lifted off the track and left there, whilst the two natives, who represent the motive power, seek a shady place near by until their services are again required. Each merchant owns his outfit.

In the past the town had an unenviable reputation for fever, and the mortality ran high for some years. In local circles the old timers will tell you that every

railroad tie represents a coffin. The surrounding country containing the swamps and flats of the Buzi and the Pungwe Rivers are anything but a health sanitarium today. Beira is so situated that it owes its development to its geographical position, for it is the natural outlet for the agricultural and mining products of Rhodesia, which of itself is sufficient to force the progress of the port.

LEAVING Beira at high tide, we resumed our voyage for Chinde, arriving there the next day. This small settlement is on the main mouth of the Zambesi, and the ship is unable to approach the shore nearer than two miles. For this distance out the water is very muddy, owing to the vast quantities of soil and trees that are annually carried down to the sea, forming sandbars, making navigation somewhat dangerous for anything but flat-bottomed boats.

At Chinde is the British custom and clearing house for British Central Africa or Nyassaland, located on a small tract of land leased from the Portuguese for that purpose. A line of flat-bottomed passenger and freight boats ply on the great river to Chiromo, which is the terminal point of the railway connecting with Blantyee, some one hundred and twenty miles inland.

Our next port was Quellimane, locally known as the Garden of East Africa, and located on another mouth of the Zambezi, some twenty miles from the sea. The entrance to the river was effected at just about high tide, and a series of bumps and jolts told of the shallow water on the bar. The river is narrow and winding, but of good depth, and on each side are numerous groves and coconut plantations. Tangerine oranges grow to perfection, as well as all kinds of tropical fruits. Truly it is a veritable garden, but a very unhealthful one. The humidity and steaming atmosphere, the deal for tropical growth and vegetation, make the climate very sickly and enervating for the European. It was here that the famous missionary, Dr. Livingstone, ended his march across Africa; and only a few miles farther up the river, at a place called Shupanga, he buried his wife.

On the next tide we left for Angoche, some four hundred miles north; and on the second day out from Quellimane we came in sight of a rise in the height of land, low-lying hills topped with bush, a decided change from the lowlands which we had been skirting since the commencement of our voyage. The captain pointed this out to me as the Matadane, knowing that was my destination.

In the whole of its eighty miles of coast line I was unable to discover a solitary hut, or a human being. It nevertheless teemed with life, animal, insect and human.

The state of the tide on our arrival at the bar would not permit our crossing, so we lay to for half an hour, after which we were successful, touching bottom once. It was now dark, and we were one and one-half miles from the shore.

In a few minutes a couple of boats came alongside for mails and passengers. One bag of mail, two Portuguese officials and myself were mustered for shore. They could not speak English, and I could not speak their language. Our conversation was mostly in monosyllables and sign language. Eight days of this was plenty for me, and I was glad to leave the ship.

We tumbled into the boats, bag and baggage, but were not able to make a landing from them. Three hundred yards from shore we got astride a native's shoulders. Hanging on to his woolly head, we made the beach. Here I decided that if I followed my baggage I would sure make no mistake. I did this for about a mile, eventually arriving at the house of the only man in the place who could speak English, and he was an Italian.

For the next three weeks, pending the arrival from the bush of my senior, I was the guest of this Italian gentleman, and right nobly did he do the honors. Intimately acquainted with native life and customs, for he was the Government agent for the recruiting of native labor for the Portuguese possessions on the West Coast, I learned much from him that proved most useful in my subsequent two years' residence among the natives, often forty or eighty miles from another white man for months at a time.

Angoche, the Portuguese name for the section of the settlement, has a population of thirty whites, at the head of which is an individual styled a *capitou môr*, the senior officer of the district, and practically an autocrat. As there is no civil law the districts of Mozambique and Nyassa are governed by the military, and the powers of the *capitou môr* are necessarily very wide. In all the affairs of the community his ruling is law, subject only to the Government at Mozambique.

The post-office is typical of the district—an unpretentious building of clay and galvanized-iron roof. The general-delivery letters are put in a cigar box on the counter. You just go in and look them over, and take what belongs to you. If you decide to take half the box or some other fellow's, well and good; no questions asked. Delightfully free and easy. The mail arrives only every two weeks.

The Societé de Madal have a warehouse here, and are engaged in the export of mangal-bark, ebony wood, ground-nuts and copra.

Hoffman, a German company, have the leading store for "white man's stuff"—groceries and canned vegetables, fruits, guns, ammunition, etc. This store is the only place where a stranger can get a lunch and a bed. Needless to say, strangers are few and far between in this out-of-the-way place; consequently no provision is made for them.

Besides the above, there are several Banyan stores. The Banyan storekeepers are natives of British India. They are to be found all along the coast, and are very successful traders amongst the natives. They probably do the bulk of the trading that is done, for they readily adapt themselves to the native way of doing business, which is something a European can not, and will not, do.

Here is the way it is done. The native comes into the store and looks around for some time. When he sees what he wants he seats himself on the floor, which is the sign that he is ready for business. The storekeeper comes over and seats himself opposite him. A conversation starts up on local gossip, in which others may join. After a while the goods are brought down, examined carefully, and haggling commences. This goes on for some time, neither being able to agree on price. The goods are then laid aside, and a lot more gossip and banter goes on until they once more get on to the business game, coupled with further haggling. This will go on until a deal is made; and more often than not it extends into a couple of hours. The native walks off with a few yards of cotton, and the Banyan puts a bag

of ground-nuts into his warehouse, each thinking he has "put one over" on the other.

The native buys his tobacco—locally made—in finger widths. Two, three or four fingers are laid on a roll of tobacco, and with a knife in the other hand the required width is cut off.

Parapat, the native village adjacent to the Portuguese settlement of Angoche, consists of about one hundred and fifty huts. In the day time it is a quiet and sleepy place; but at night many fires are lighted in the central plaza, and dancing goes on most of the night. The monotony of the drums is very trying to a newcomer.

MY THREE weeks being about ended, I was expecting the arrival of my senior from the interior at any hour; and in due course he arrived. much broken in health and suffering from an attack of blackwater fever. I therefore immediately prepared for my journey and took with me for cook and general handy man a native who had previously been in the employ of my senior and whose name was Mokosetti. After his height—he was six feet—his mouth formed the most conspicuous part of his features, and this was in proportion to his height; but as it was his business to take care of his own commissary department, I had no cause to worry over his board-bill. He understood a few words of English—sufficient to make him a nuisance. Swahili and Makua he also spoke fluently, and in addition he also was able to speak some Portuguese. It was apparent to me that any spare time I had could be usefully employed in acquiring a working knowledge of these languages; and with a Swahili vocabulary and a Portuguese-English conversation book, coupled with some Makua words, I evolved a jargon which soon enabled me to get along fairly well.

At two o'clock in the afternoon we embarked on a dhow. The crew consisted of Omari, the captain, a burly, turbaned type of the coast, with his crew of two seamen, myself, Mokosetti and two native women. Our cargo comprised ten bags of rice and a few boxes of merchandise. With a favorable wind we proceeded to the Melula River by way of the main island of Angoxa, and arrived there at sunset.

The wind dropping, we anchored for the night inside the bar to await the morning tide. By midnight the tide had receded to such an extent that our boat was resting on a vast expanse of mud at least a mile from shore. On each side of us were mangal swamps, the night air from which was anything but conducive to sleep, especially on bags of rice.

With the incoming tide at daylight and a freshening wind in our favor we crossed the bar and were southward bound at a fairly good clip, and by luck reached our destination, a small native village three miles up the Cocola River called Tabua, just before sunset. This place consisted in the immediate vicinity of four or five huts, one of which belonged to Nahoka, the chief of the district. The rest of the clan as I afterward learned were scattered around the country. Here I spent two months awaiting the arrival of machinery from England, with which we were to experiment in the treatment of crude rubber.

DURING my stay at Tabua I had ample opportunity to get acquainted with my surroundings and the natives of the district; also their various chiefs.

I had also a suitable site to select for the location of the plant, soundings to take farther up the river and various other matters to attend to in connection with the handling, erection and transportation of heavy machinery in a country more or less difficult of access and without any means of transportation other than crude native labor.

The site eventually selected for the location of the plant, up on the hills at the village of M'Pago, was four miles from the head of the Cocola River. The latter would be more properly named as an arm of the sea, for it terminated from a width of a mile to a small narrow creek of shallow water, at the head of which we unloaded all of our machinery and a twenty H. P. vertical boiler, and this was rolled for four miles, up and down hill and across the swamps, by gangs of men. The work was slow and tedious, but after nine months the plant was erected and ready for steam.

The trial run of the plant was evidently to be the day of days amongst the natives, none of whom had seen or heard of a steam engine and knew nothing about it. To them it seemed to be a lot of "useless white man's junk," and the day that steam was first raised in the boiler, I had an assembly of three hundred men, women and children. In their faces one could distinctly see many kinds of emotions—wonderment, expectancy, fear, exhilaration. At eighty pounds pressure steam was turned on with the cylinder cocks open.

This was the exhaust, and the movement of the engine was quite sufficient to start the stampede, and away into the bush went everybody, shouting, laughing, crying and scared to death. One woman, I afterward learned, went insane and had to be held down. It was quite some time before they came out, but they gradually returned, venturing a little nearer all the time, but still in fear.

Throughout the day I noticed an individual sitting on the side of a hill some four hundred yards away. By four o'clock he had approached to within a few feet of the machines. It took him some hours to accomplish the distance, but he employed his time in studying out the situation, and eventually decided that it was safe to come alone. He turned out to be Kuropa, the paramount chief of the Matadane, and this was the first opportunity I had of seeing him. On asking through my interpreter the cause of this stampede, I was told that they were much afraid of the "white man's spirit that was in the boiler."—R. G. WARING.

Riding Through Mexico

A COUNTRY abounding in game—but be sure you get a gun license before you cross the border:

Request:—"My partner and myself are expecting to leave for Mexico at an early date. We expect to ride through on horseback, and do some hunting, prospecting and find a little adventure. It would help us greatly if you would answer the following questions:

What is the attitude of the natives toward outsiders, especially the Yaqui Indians?

Is there much mining down there and what kind?

Are there any big companies?

Is there much hunting in the mountains and what kind of big game is there?

What kind of rifle and ammunition, also pistol, are used mostly down there?

What kind of provisions would you advise taking if we had a pack-horse?

What business opportunities are there in the towns?

What clothing would you advise for that climate?

We would appreciate it very much if you would answer the above questions to the best of your knowledge."—WILLIS T. LIND, Austin, Tex.

Reply, by Mr. Whiteaker:—The natives in Mexico are inclined to be friendly with Americans as a rule. America is doing much for the Mexicans in a business way, developing the resources of the country, making improvements in their mining, agricultural and manufacturing methods. Most of the Yaqui Indians are a sober, industrious people. There are a few that are in a savage state but you are not likely to find these as they are in a remote region far from the usual run of men.

Mining is one of the chief industries of Mexico. The States of Sonora and Chihuahua rank among the richest mineral regions in the world. Minerals of all kinds are to be found in these States and in adjoining States. Silver, copper, gold, lead, zinc, coal, and many other minerals are found in the northern States of Mexico.

Most of the hunting done in Mexico is by foreigners as the natives are not much inclined to hunting except for their food supply. Bear, deer, antelope, mountain goats, sheep, puma, jaguar, peccary, tapir, beaver, armadillo, rabbit, marten, otter and others. The lakes are good places for ducks, geese, swans, cranes, herons, storks, and other aquatic birds. Quail and many other such fowls are abundant. A hunting license is now required to hunt in Mexico. You can find out about this at the port of entry.

A 30.30 rifle for big game and a shot gun of 12 gage for birds are the customary weapons used. It is doubtful if you can enter that country with firearms without a special permit. You may be able to pick up some firearms after you arrive down there. I knew a party of four men in El Paso last summer who were held up for three weeks on account of wanting to take their guns with them; they left them on this side.

Lay in your supplies on the other side so as not to have to pay duty on your animals and also on a large amount of eats. Ride the train to a good town, buy your burros for three or four dollars a piece, get enough grub to last you for a few weeks, find an Indian guide for a few cents a day and live off of the country. Get acquainted with an American who knows the ropes and get him to buy your stuff for you so that you will not get stung on the prices.

Most of the larger towns in Northern Mexico are Americanized. Many opportunities in a business way can be found if sought.

The days as a whole are like late fall, except on the lowlands where it gets rather warm about midday. The nights are chilly and you will need several blankets, especially in the mountainous sections. You will not need much clothing—several pairs of heavy socks, heavy and light underwear, good heavy shoes and leather puttees unless you wear boots, woolen shirts, and after you get there you can see what the others are wearing.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

The "Wells Fargo" Colt

A FEW collectors are aware of the differences between this type of weapon and the "Old Model" Colt pocket pistol:

Request:—"Will you please answer the following questions?

What is a Wells-Fargo Colt?

Did Col. Colt manufacture it?

Could anybody buy it except the Wells-Fargo people?

What was the difference between it and the pocket pistol Colt of that period?

I don't expect you to write a book on arms, but a few words will be welcome."—LEONARD ANDERSON, Newburyport, Mass.

Reply, by Mr. Barker:—The so-called "Wells Fargo" Colt was a .31 caliber pocket pistol or revolver, it was an issue of 1851 (not many made), five shots, with no loading lever. It resembled the "Old Model" 1849 pocket pistol, with which it is usually confounded, there being these differences:

The "Old Model" had a square-backed trigger guard, and elliptical or round cylinder slots or stops, while the proper "Wells Fargo" had square cylinder slots and round-backed trigger guard.

Colt revolvers, after 1850, including the "Wells Fargo" proper, had a small bearing wheel at the base of the hammer bearing on the main spring; revolvers made in 1848-49, including the "Old Model," had not. The 1848-49 revolvers had no little slot in the base of the nose of the hammer, with corresponding points between the cylinder nipples, for the slot to fit over and thus lock the piece between shots. Those made after 1850 did have this feature. On some of the "Old Model" revolvers just one point and the slot in the hammer will be found.

Very few people, even, collectors, know of this variation between the "Old Model" and the "Wells Fargo" proper, and term them all "Wells Fargo." As a matter of fact, the "Wells Fargo" Co. did not start operating till 1852. As probably less than one thousand five hundred of the "Old Model" were made, they are extremely scarce; quite as much so as a Paterson Colt, which is one made by the first Co. in Paterson, N. J. They were identical in having no loading lever. This distinction between these two types of "Old Model" and "Wells Fargo" is ignored by Bannerman's latest catalog and, indeed, by all authors, so far as I know, except Sawyer. Many persons, thinking they have a complete line of Colts, have not, as they have but one of these two, obviously, usually the "Wells Fargo" proper.

Any one could buy it. It was used by the "Wells Fargo" messengers, and by police officers, being less apt to catch on being drawn than one with the regulation loading lever.

Lack of loading lever was the noticeable difference. These two were the only two Colts, save the Paterson ones, that had no loading lever.

The full statement of the departments, as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

Books About Ju-Jutsu

GOOD dope for the amateur interested in wrestling:

Request:—"What books will give me full information about ju-jutsu—also called ju-jitsu, jiu-jitsu or judo?

Are there any books (in English, of course) on this subject printed in Japan?

I am not interested so much about its history or evolution, but wish to study its principles and theories."—STEPHEN J. RAPICANO, Newark, N. J.

Reply, by Mrs. Knudson:—"Judo: Japanese Physical Culture," by Arima, may be purchased through a firm called Orientalia, 32 West 58th Street, New York City. The price formerly was $5.50. And they may have other books upon the subject in their list of more recent acquirements—my information is now several months old.

"Jui-Jitsu Combat Tricks," by Hancock, is published by G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2 West 45th Street, New York City.

By addressing a letter of inquiry to Professor Kano's Ju-jitsu School, Kodo-Kan, Tokyo, Japan, you will, I think, get on the track of more English-written books. Professor Kano is the leading authority upon ju-jitsu in Japan and has written quite extensively upon his work, but I do not know the names of his recent works or of his publishers. He has turned out many English-speaking students. You can safely write him in English.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose full return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

Alaska's Climate

WHERE forty below is not uncomfortable—if there's no wind:

Request:—"Would you please give me following information concerning weather conditions of Alaska:

How low does the temperature drop at different times of year in various parts of Alaska?

What is the lowest temperature a person can endure and be able to be about on trap lines, etc.?

What do people do when caught away from shelter in storms and weather turning colder than they can stand?

What kind of clothing do people wear to be able to go about their work in the colder weather?"—GEO. W. HIMES, Garrett, Pa.

Reply, by Mr. Solomons:—Summer temperatures in Alaska are about spring temperatures elsewhere though occasionally, especially in southern Alaska and in the interior one may experience quite a degree of heat and discomfort. Winter temperatures on the south coast are much milder than in the eastern and north-central United States, due to the comparatively low latitude and the sea. In interior Alaska, going northward, the temperature in winter is naturally lower and lower, reaching its coldest before one next encounters the tempering influence of water again—Arctic Ocean water. Rampart, on the Yukon, may have, say, seventy degrees, but taking northern Alaska and Canada in general, the coldest spells run fifty to sixty below, while twenty to forty below are the average December to February temperatures.

Temperature itself means little relatively, with respect to the discomfort or danger to human beings. In a dry, still air—the almost invariable concomitant conditions of great cold—ordinary wool or fur clothing, if dry, protects the body perfectly, insulates it. And the only vulnerable parts are those of the face that are pointed or where the bones are close—end of nose, chin, cheek bones, ears, etc. You have to watch them, rubbing them a bit now and again to maintain the circulation. People work out of doors in Alaska all winter, doing the same work at fifty and even sixty below.

But wind! Or damp! They are something else again. Men don't last long when low temperatures are added to wind or moisture, and a blizzard with a temperature of zero is far more deadly than 70 degrees below in a dry, still air. When you have forty below and a blizzard, which is not very common—look out!

When the blizzard begins you beat it for home. If you haven't any home near you make camp—shelter behind a rock, in timber, bank of a stream—anything. And get into your sleeping bag. No sleeping bag? Well, it's like this: In a northern country subject to storms a man should never be far away from his cabin or shack or tent without having his sleeping bag with him. That's the answer.

However, if he just simply hasn't it with him his one best bet is shelter. A cave will give it or a very protected niche of rocks, but even then he will have to keep moving or exercising his limbs if the blow continues long. And eating regularly. If shelter is not at hand he must make himself a snow shelter by kicking up a big heap of it, crawling into it, tunneling, and then try to press up so as to give himself a little room—fashioning thus a kind of chamber just a bit larger than his body. Preferably the floor of it should be the original earth, which may have tundra moss or dry grass for surface. Otherwise the warmth of his body will melt the snow beneath him and he might get somewhat wet. That would hurt a lot when he came to beat it away on the storm subsiding. If dry, in such a shelter, he will be as safe and almost as comfortable as in a bag. If there is no snow for shelter and no other shelter he will die if the wind continues long enough. Clothing in winter is just dry woolens, with a fur *parka* instead of overcoat. Of course the feet and hands have to be well protected—they are the really vulnerable parts.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

Northern Australia

A TERRITORY of infinite promise:

Request:—"I have heard that there are excellent opportunities at Port Darwin, but not being desirous of entering on a wild-goose chase I would be obliged could you give me some definite information on the place.

1. What tin-mines are in the vicinity of Port Darwin?

2. What are the ruling wages for a skilled labour or an unskilled labour? I am a woodworker by trade.

3. What is the fare from Sydney to Port Darwin? Who are the agents for the ships and the average cost of living there?

4. Is it considered healthy or not for the average white man?"—H. G. L., Sydney, N. S. W., Australia.

Reply, by Mr. Norman:—I am now in a position to reply seriatim to your queries. First, meet Mr. Nelson, M.P. for the Northern Territory, who has the rare distinction of possessing the status and all the emoluments of a member of the Federal Legislature and endowed with the right to talk, but is prevented by an anachronistic enactment from recording a note on any subject relating to his constituency.

I submitted your queries to Mr. Nelson. The replies are mainly his:

1. What tin mines are there in the vicinity of Port Darwin?

Answer:—All kinds of minerals occur in the Territory. The only reason for their not being exploited is lack of transportation facilities. The biggest tin field in Australia lies about fifty miles from the present railway from Port Darwin to Katharine River (the Marranboy field). Values range from four to five per cent. The tin-bearing area covers hundreds of square miles. A railway will be in course of construction within eighteen months which will run within ten miles of Marranboy, and should be completed in two years. The mining area of the territory covers the whole of the North and Central portions of the area, and comprehends approximately 250,000 square miles of territory, much of which has never been exploited. Many huge base-metal lodes are known to exist, but are not worked owing to their isolation.

2. Re wages, etc., Mr. Nelson writes on this point:—

"As much as I desire to see the Territory populated, I would not advise any wage-earner to go there. The type of men required in the N. T. is the self-reliant prospector or settler. Hundreds of unemployed, embracing every known trade, are, and have been out of work for over twelve months." (This is due to strikes, I. W. Wism and doddering political incapacity—P. N.).

3. Fares from Sydney to Darwin are:

First-class single £25, second-class £16. Agents, Burns, Philp & Co., Bridge Street, Sydney.

Climate. Stefannson, the Arctic explorer, describes it as a "tonic climate." The native-born residents are the best type of Australian the continent produces.

For pastoral purposes—horse, cattle, sheep or pig-raising—the Territory has no equal in Australia. The chief drawback to settlement is lack of cheap transportation. With the advent of the N. T. Railway, this difficulty will be considerably overcome.

So, sir, don't, on any account, migrate to the N. T. unless you will fill the bill as a self-reliant prospector."

WITH many of Mr. Nelson's glowing statements I am in complete discord. The N. T. has been prospected and exploited for thirty years, and has never produced any wonderful results. It was said of Kalgoorlie—as Mr. Nelson says of the N. T.—that the mineral-bearing area covered thousands of square miles. To-day, Kalgoorlie is practically worked out, and the richly-impregnated composite ore-bodies occurred within a longtudinal length of *less than one statute mile.*

Otherwise, the N. T. offers incomparable faculties for pastoral promotion. And although the Federal Government proposes squandering many millions of pounds on an unnecessary railway hundreds of miles long, mainly for the transport of cheap and nasty politicians, its construction will no more stimulate the progress of the distressful area than a fly-blister will remove a carbuncle from a wooden leg.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

Hunting in the Everglades

ALL THE alligators are growing scarce, but there's still lots of game to be found:

Request:—"A party of three of us intend to go to Florida from here by auto, for the purpose of hunting and fishing in the Everglades and vicinity.

Kindly inform me as to kind of game in that vicinity? I have a .38-.55 caliber Winchester carbine, and a .38 Smith and Wesson Special. Do you think these big and heavy enough for game there?

Can you hunt at night with a jack light?

What kind of fishing tackle is best? Size of lines, hooks, length of rod, flies, bait, etc.?

How about hunting alligators? Can you hunt them, and how, at night?

All information will be highly appreciated."—FRANK J. SMITH, JR., Hamilton, Ohio.

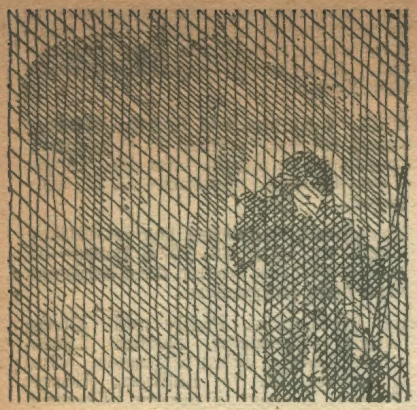
Reply, by Mr. Liebe:—The game to be found in the *vicinity* of the 'Glades—rather than *in* the 'Glades—is deer, turkey, bobcat, a few panther and small black bear, fox, squirrel, quail, snipe, etc. The weapons you name are big enough, surely. I'd use soft-nose bullets in the rifle. Carrying a revolver in Florida is unlawful.

Hunting regular game at night, I think, is barred by law. Write the Florida State Game Warden, at Tallahassee, for pamphlet copy of game laws. Your non-resident hunting license will come high, by the way—about $25 per county per hunter, I think.

Fishing-tackle? If you cast, use a short rod, twenty-four pound test black silk line, level-winding reel, and for baits light-colored—running to red, white and yellow—wooden minnows. The best minnow I know is Pflueger's "Surprize," with Heddon's "Zaragossa" and "Head-On Basser," and South Bend's "Bass-oreno," next in line. Of course, you can use live minnows, if you can get them, in place of the artificial ones. This, you understand, is for bass, the only fish you are likely to find in the 'Glades country. Flies are not well-liked here.

Hunting alligators? They're pretty scarce now. Usually hunted at night by "shining" their eyes with a light, shot, and the spot marked; next day one can go back with a long hook on a long pole and find them—if he has really killed them. There is little in it, commercially. So far as I know, there is no law against killing 'gators.

I believe this answers your questions. I'm wishing you good luck.



LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible*. All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

UNCLAIMED mail is held by Adventure for the following persons, who may obtain it by sending us present address and proof of identity.

ADDLEMAN, FRANK R. C.; Aldridge, F. P.; Bailey, Dick; Baptiste, Jean; Balensifer, Frank A. W.; Bell, Raymond; Bertsch, Elizabeth; Beverley, C. S.; Bishop, L. S.; Blaicher, Charles A.; Bonner, Major J. S.; Boes, Mrs.; Baulton, Gay A.; Bourland, C. E.; Bower, B. M.; Brown, Mrs. W. E.; Buckley, Ray; Buction, F. W.; Butterfield, M E.; Bryon, J.; Cadwallader, John Richard; Calvert, Earle F.; Cantrell, C. W.; Capes, Albert; Carr, John; Carpenter, Capt, Robert S.; Center, Jack; Champlain, Geo. W.; Chartrand, A.; "Chink"; Clark, Ernest S.; Clements, John; Coles, Bobby; Crobett, Fred P.; Coleman, J. J.; Collins, J. P.; Connor, A. M.; Cook, Eliott D.; Cook, Wm. N. Corporal; Courtland Victor; Crozier, W. Al; Dalton, Fred; Davis; De Brissac, Ricardo; Dennis, F. C.; Dector, Hatherine; Donovan, Anna Lyle; Douglas, Wm.; Drake, Homer B.; Drake, Miss Jean; Edwards, Edgar; Erwin, Phil; Farrel, Sgt. James M.; Fossum, Ralph; Franklin, R.; Fisher, Sgt. R.; Gale, Geo. A.; Garlick, Clyde W.; Carson, Ed.; Grahame, Arthur W.; Greene, L. E.; Grimm, H. C.; Gunn, P. R.; Hailstorm, Chief; Harmon, Richard A.; Harriss, Walter J.; Haskins, S. S.; Hoff, Dan; Hooker, Wm. F.; Hughes, Frank E.; Hunt, Daniel O'Connell; Iverson, Geo. L.; Irving, Thomas L.; Jackson, R. R.; James, Dan; Kelly, C. H.; Kohler, Lloyd; Kuckaby, Wm. Francis; Lange, Larisey, Jack; Larrett, Henry; La Sonn, Fred W. Mrs.; Lee, Wm. R.; Lekki Michael; McAdams, W. B.; McGovern J. V.; McKaughan, Robert S.; McKee, A. L.; McLane, A.; McMahon, T. A.; McNair, Henry S.; Mackintosh, D. T. A.; MacDonald, James; Marut, Ret; May, E. C.; Miller, Walter; Minor, John; Moore, Robert; Moore, Ted; Nelson F. L.; North, Mrs. M. P.; Nylander, Towne, J.; Ogden, Carl M.; O'Hara, Jack; Overton, C. H.; Parker, G. A.; Parrott, D. C.; Phillips, Buffington; Pigeon, A. M.; Posner, Geo, A.; Rhines, Wm. L.; Rich, Bob, Wagner; Raymond, C. E.; Roe, Mrs. Vingie; Rogan, Chas. B.; Roycroft, Lloyd C.; Rutherford, May (Mr.); Ryan, J.; St. Clair, Fred; Schaffer, Geo; Schen, Walter A.; Schmidt, Geo; Seville, Mrs. A. L.; Service, Robert; Sloan Ch. A.; Simonds, Frank W.; Slaght, E. Clive; Smith, C. O.; Smith, Mrs. Kenneth; Sorensen, Wm. Neil; Starr, Ted; Stevens, Albert A. Mrs.; Stewart, E. J.; Stocking, C. B.; Stonway, James; Strong Mr.; Sullivan, Walter; Taylor, George W.; Tobin, Kathryn; Thaxter, Kenneth; Van Tassel, Harry; Van Tyler, Chester Varner, C. W.; Von Gelucke, Byron; Ward, Frank B.; Warren, C. Chester; Watkins, E. V.; Webb, Charles N.; Werner, Bert; Williams, Grover; Wolf, Roy; Williams, Frank S.; Wright, Charles J.; Mendelson, Alick; W. S.-XV; 348; C. C. C.; H. V. S.; T. W. S.; "Lonely Jack"; 2480; J. C. H.; 398; W. A. H.

LACHAPELLE, ENSEBE. Father and sons, Ernest, Leo, Arthur and George. Any information regarding them will be appreciated.—WILFRED J. LACHAPELLE, 120 Hyde Street, San Francisco, California.

W. C. N. Letter received. Everything settled back here. Write. Send money when you can.

CARKEEK, CHARLES. Native of Pennsylvania. Last heard from about 1912 in Valier, Montana. Mother died in 1917 and his share of estate still being held by court. Any news of him will be gratefully received by his sister—MRS. ETHEL R. CEASE, 400 East Union Street, Nauticoke, Penna.

MOORE, GEORGE W. We are living at 418 H. Street, N. E., Washington. Write or come and see us.—MARY AND ALL.

MCTURNAL JAMES, or any of his family. When last heard of, had retired from the steel business and was living in Omaha. His son, also James, was a civil engineer who planned a number of bridges in Washington. His wife died when I was six years old. Anyone knowing my father's people, address—CHARLES J. MCTURNAL, care of *Adventure*.

RANCE, ANDREW. Home in Florida. Your old shipyard friend would like to hear from you. Jacksonville, Fla., 1918. Address—J. C. FINCH, care of L. O. O. M., 533 F. St., San Diego, Calif.

CORBIN, A. W., of Tampa, Fla. and Isle of Pines. Last heard from in Newport, Kentucky, possibly in California. Your old ship-fitter friend would hear from you. Address—J. C. FINCH, care of L. O. O. M., San Diego, California.

RENARD. I should like to find my sister's children, Claud and Irven Renard, age thirty-two and thirty. Both born at Rector, Clay County, Ark. Their mother's maiden name was Nannie Taylor, their father's name was Charles Renard. Their mother died in 1898. Father and boys went to Portland, Oregon, about 1912, where they were last heard from in 1914. Any information regarding them would be appreciated by their aunt—MRS. DALLIE SIMMS, 800 South 3rd Street, Rogers, Ark.

SETTLE, SAMUEL. I would like to find my brother whom I have not seen since I was a girl. Few months ago I had word from Mexican official that he was in Mexico in 1922. He has been in the western and southern states many years. Went West later. Address—MRS. HARRIET BANKS, 53 Mosher Street, New Bedford, Mass.

MCLOUGHLIN, PETER. Left his home in Buffalo, New York about thirty-one years ago. Was supposed to have gone to Alaska. Any information concerning him will be appreciated by his sister—MRS. FRED HOOMESLEY, Libby, Montana, Box 187.

BELL, HARRY. Son of J. W. and Persis A. Bell, formerly of 5503 South Park Avenue, Los Angeles, Calif., and at one time in the cigar business at 122 N. Main St., Los Angeles. Can learn something of interest to him bearing upon his father's estate by communicating with the party named below. The person sought was raised in Silver City, New Mexico. Address—H. L. O'NEIL, Room 808, 112 W. 9 Street, Los Angeles, Calif.

TALLMAN, GEORGE (Shorty). Last heard of in Gibbons, Nebraska, November, 1924. Any information will be appreciated by his buddy. Address—JAMES HARRISON, 149 High Street, Fitchburg, Mass.

EX-MARINES. Anyone who served with the Seventh Company fitfall regiment during 1919 and up until September, 1922, are asked to write to their old buddy. V. H. R. in care of this magazine.

MUNROE. Any person who was acquainted with the family of Christina Munro during the years of 1878-79 in Glasgow or thereabouts, please communicate—E. LESLIE, Box 226, G. P. O., Melbourne, Australia.

BOSTON, CHARLES C. Lived at 1918 South 60 Street, Philadelphia, Penna. Mother and I are alone and would appreciate a letter. Address—PANSY E. BOSTON, 612 West Fifth Street, Wilmington, Del.

CHARLES, W. Write to me at once. Children left alone. Sick in bed. Get letter from *Adventure* office. Hurry.—LOIS.

DAUGHERTY, JOHN or "Curley Wile." Worked in Goldfield, 1912 and 1913. Have important news for him. Anyone knowing his whereabouts please notify—T. A. MILLS, Goldfield, Nevada, Box 344.

WORTHINGTON, PRIVATE ALBERT EDWARD. Served with the 34th Infantry, Camp Meade, Maryland, up to June last. Told me he was coming out of the army three months before his time was up and was coming home with a chum. Since then neither my daughter nor I have heard from him. Am worried. Anyone knowing about him please communicate with his mother.—MRS. J. DRISCOLL, 1229 E. 4 Street, Long Beach, Calif.

C. F. E. Will be home the fifteenth of April. Put an item in *Adventure* and let us know how you are. What have the children or I done to you that you won't write. I have been forgiving you for everything and still love you. Your home is always here whenever you want to come back. Address—LILLIAN VERA C.

FLACK, ISAAC M. Forty-seven years old. Last heard of in Chicago, September 18, 1924. Was employed by some express company. Civil engineer by trade. Spoke of going to St. Louis. Anyone knowing his whereabouts since then, please notify sister—MRS. A. BRULEY, 138 N. Segovia Avenue, San Gabriel, Calif.

WILSON, OLIVER. Last seen in Toronto, Canada in 1916. Five feet four inches in height, dark complexion. Steamfitter by trade; also boxer. Any information gratefully received. Address—E. GOSLING, 188 Sixth Avenue, Brooklyn, New York.

TUCKER, LORENZO. Last heard of in Alix, Alberta, Canada. Please send me your present P. O. address, as I must have your signature on a quit-claim deed to the property I bought of you in 1915. Address—D. W. McKINNEY, Saginaw, Oregon.

THE following have been inquired for in either the April 30, 1925, or May 20, 1925, issues of Adventure. They can get the name and address of the inquirer from this magazine.

McMAHON, Andy; McMorrow, Paddy and Denis; Lewis, Oscar; Angle; Kaufman; Dutton Louisa Thomas or Elizabeth Brin; Leggat, John; O'Connor, John; Ordway, Charles P.; Abbott, W. V.; Baldwin, Harry; Blystone, Vernon; Brown, Lennox Denham; Corning, Harold; Douglas, William.

MISCELLANEOUS—Darling Jack, please let me know where you are; would like to hear from those who knew me while serving in Camp Supply Detachment, Q. M. C., Camp Merrit, New Jersey.



THE TRAIL AHEAD

JUNE 20TH ISSUE

Besides the **complete novel** and the **two complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

SKIPPERS OFF GEORGES — *Warren Elliot Carleton*
Captain Dan wanted to be high-liner.

PARDS A Five-Part Story Part III — *Hugh Pendexter*
The Pilgrim met the torturer in the Colorado mountains.

FLOOD — *David Thibault*
When the leveé broke.

KING THE HUSKY — *John Beames*
Man and dog were two of a kind.

THE TEETH OF McCLURE — *Rolf Bennett*
They were magic to the natives.

THE KING'S MEAL — *F. St. Mars*
The eagle's swoop means death.

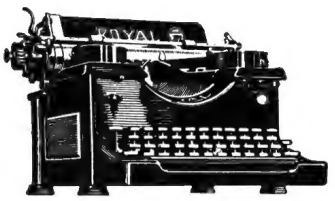
MEDICINAL METHODS — *John Murray Reynolds*
Chewing cut-plug is a man's job.

Still Farther Ahead

THE three issues following the next will contain *long* stories by Leonard H. Nason, George E. Holt, J. Allan Dunn, Everett Saunders, Frederick Moore, Walter J. Coburn, John Murray Reynolds, Georges Surdez, Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur and Charles Victor Fischer; and short stories by Captain Mansfield, Michael J. Phillips, Ralph R. Perry, Chester T. Crowell, Alanson Skinner, Fairfax Downey, Bill Adams, Royce Brier, George Bruce Marquis, F. St. Mars, Alex. McLaren, Alan Le May and others; stories of dragoons in France, cowboys on the Western Range, traders in the South Seas, desert riders in Morocco, revolutionists in Central America, lumberjacks in the North Woods, hardcase skippers on the high seas, French troopers in Africa, gobs with the Atlantic Fleet, Indian detectives on the reservation, adventurers the world around.

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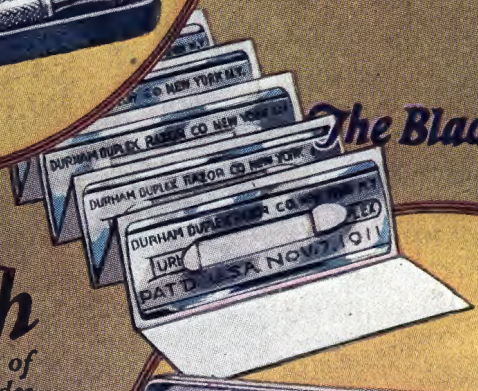
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